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SENIOR LEADERSHIP - THE CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF COMBAT POWER

A leadership analysis of selected World War II commanders, European Theater, 1944-45.

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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B.S., United States Military Academy, 1969
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Among the many conclusions which could be drawn from this investigation are: personal leadership was instrumental in each commander's success, although all used diverse styles; all three exhibited an appropriate level of technical competence, regardless of how this expertise was obtained; each used different, but successful, approaches to organizational leadership; and their effective management techniques consistently stressed mission-type orders, regular visits to forward units and well-defined goals.

The study concludes that the conceptual framework used is appropriate for systematic investigations of senior leadership and organizational behavior and is useful to the historian as a means of examining and describing the battlefield performance of other historical figures.

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Jerry Dean Morelock

ABSTRACT

SENIOR LEADERSHIP - THE CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF COMBAT POWER: A Leadership Analysis of Selected World War II Commanders, European Theater, 1944-45, by Major Jerry D. Morelock, USA, 213 pages.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of
Lieutenant Colonel Boyd M. Harris.
(1944 - 1983)

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CHAPTER 1

LEADERSHIP AND HISTORY - AN INTRODUCTION

Background

Acknowledged by the United States Army as "the crucial element of combat power,"¹ leadership is currently being examined in all its many aspects so that its systematic study can assist in the development of competent, effective leaders at all levels. In an article addressing the relationship of leadership, management and command, the principal author of the Army's basic leadership manual has pointed out that:

During his graduation address to the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (USACGSC) ... [the] Chief of Staff of the Army ... pointed out that training, maintaining, leading and caring are important factors of our army. Clearly, leadership is at the forefront of much of our activity today. An indication of the importance the Army is placing on leadership is the establishment of the Center for Leadership and Ethics at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, as part of the USACGSC. Leadership and its importance have the attention of the Army.²

The Center for Leadership and Ethics has completed a total revision of this basic leadership manual, Field Manual 22-100, Military Leadership. The revised manual represents current doctrine concerning the development of the basic leadership attributes necessary for carrying out the major leadership responsibilities within the Army. Subsequent to the development of this manual, attention is now focused on the systematic application of leadership doctrine, theory and study to the problems of leadership at the higher end of the responsibility and span of control spectrum. This next area is

the study of senior-level leaders, those "leaders in command and staff positions at large organizations."³

The purpose of this thesis is to support the study of leadership at senior levels by providing thoroughly researched, historical case studies of selected successful combat commanders from the U.S. Army's past. It is intended to support the development of doctrine for the education and training of the Army's senior leaders by presenting positive examples of past U.S. Army senior commanders who have demonstrated those aspects of leadership comprising the Center for Leadership and Ethic's conceptual framework.

Another purpose is to provide an historical investigation of certain aspects of the major campaigns in World War II which have not been extensively investigated to date. The campaigns in northern Europe in 1944 and 1945 have resulted in names such as Eisenhower, Bradley and Patton becoming famous, but little has been published concerning their major subordinates and contemporaries such as Simpson, Middleton and Wood. The significant contributions of these men deserve recognition. Serving under the overall command of Eisenhower and contemporary with Patton were dedicated, competent leaders who neither sought nor found fame or publicity but who effectively commanded their armies, corps, and divisions in the intense, fluid campaigns in northern Europe.

For example, compare George S. Patton, Jr., and William H. Simpson. Both graduated from USMA with the class of 1909, both served in responsible positions in combat during World War I and both progressed through the Army's system of schools and commands between the wars.⁴ Both commanded an army during the campaigns

of 1944-1945 and both had a significant impact on the defeat of German forces during the Ardennes Offensive.⁵ Both drove their armies deep into Germany (Simpson's Ninth Army was first to reach the Elbe and was halted by command fifty miles from Berlin).⁵ Yet, while virtually everyone knows the flashy, publicity-seeking Patton, few have heard of the quietly competent Simpson.

The twofold purpose of this thesis is to study senior leadership in order to apply it to the development of effective senior leaders and to study the often overlooked accomplishments of some outstanding senior leaders of World War II.

Thesis Statement

The thesis takes the form of an historical analysis of the demonstrated leadership attributes of selected United States Army senior leaders in the European Theater of Operations of World War II, 1944-1945, using the conceptual framework of current leadership doctrine.

This historical investigation is in the form of an analysis of specific situations in which these men were involved during one or more of the important campaigns in northern Europe during the final year of the war. Each of the situations and incidents presented is analyzed using the conceptual framework of current U.S. Army doctrine as it has been applied in the development of the Senior-Level Leadership Manual, FM 12-999. The senior commanders chosen for analysis commanded an army, a corps and a division, all operating in similar environments in World War II.

The major terms requiring definition or clarification are:

Senior Leader - For the purpose of this study, the senior leader is a United States Army officer commanding a formation of division size or larger.

Focus - The focus of this thesis is limited to the campaigns and related activities occurring in the European Theater of Operations from June 1944 through April 1945.

Leadership Attributes - The beliefs, values, character traits, knowledge and skills possessed by a leader.⁷

Leadership Techniques (Techniques of Command) - The mechanisms, tools, methods and procedures employed by a commander in the exercise of his art; they vary from individual to individual and vary between the different stages of the command process.⁸

Character - The sum total of a leader's personality traits; rests on the foundation of the leader's values, beliefs and ethics; positive character traits of an effective military leader include courage, competence, candor, commitment, will, self-discipline, flexibility, confidence, endurance, decisiveness, coolness under stress, initiative, justice and self-improvement.⁹

Conceptual Framework - The model; the structure through which the investigation is conducted; the functions and attributes which comprise the definition of senior-level leadership.¹⁰

Personal Leadership - The personality and character of the leader as they are applied to influencing subordinates to accomplish a task: the Be, Know and Do of basic leadership as explained in FM 12-100.¹¹

Technical Competence - The ability to perform successfully those tasks necessary to effectively complete a mission: those

skills peculiar to a profession which must be mastered in order to be considered proficient in that profession.

Organizational Leadership - The ability of the leader to influence the total performance of the group by organizing and directing the group's efforts toward a common goal; the establishment and maintenance of a structure for focusing the efforts of a group for the common good.

Management - The techniques, skills and abilities of a leader to provide implementation and direction for an organization; includes analyzing, planning, goal setting, problem solving, decision making, allocating resources, coordinating, supervising and evaluating.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this thesis consists of the application of the conceptual framework of FM 22-999, Senior-Level Leadership to the demonstrated performance of three senior leaders of World War II. The draft Senior-Level Leadership manual having defined senior-level leadership, a lengthy development of a model to be used in this thesis is unnecessary. The basic purpose is to provide historical analysis of senior leaders using the approved conceptual framework, not the independent development of a separate model nor the validation of already accepted doctrine.

The Center for Leadership and Ethics defines Army senior leadership as comprised of: personal leadership; technical competence; organizational leadership; and management.¹⁷ These four concepts represent the conceptual framework through which the three senior leaders will be analyzed. The application of this conceptual

framework to each senior leader by means of an historical analysis of their demonstrated performance represents the major portion of the thesis. The format for this application is a narrative description consisting of: an introduction of the leader; any required background information; incidents and events which illustrate the concepts of the model; additional analysis and discussion as required.

The introduction of each of the three commanders includes biographical information necessary to assist in understanding his character as well as any major influences which may have been indicated in the research as pertinent to the situation. Additional background information is provided wherever required to establish as complete a picture of each situation as possible within research constraints and available data. The individual incidents and examples demonstrate and describe the actions of the senior leaders and are described in as much detail as necessary. Analysis and discussion investigate the situations and provide a doctrinal look at the demonstrated performance. Comparison with other examples is provided as applicable.

To provide a commonality of basic values and beliefs, American senior leaders were chosen to present to an American audience. This choice of the European Theater American commanders provides a common environment and background in which the three commanders conducted operations as well as providing an historical time period with which most serving officers of today are familiar. The three senior leaders chosen for analysis are: General William Hood Simpson, who commanded the Ninth U.S. Army during 1944-1945; General Troy Houston Middleton, who commanded the VIII Corps from

the Normandy landings to the final surrender; and General John Shirley Wood, who commanded the 4th Armored Division from June, 1942 until December, 1944.

This thesis has the obvious limitations inherent in attempting to analyze complex events and individuals many years after they occurred and in only a few short pages. Additionally, it is necessarily somewhat limited by the paucity of sources concerning these particular senior leaders. Finally, there are also physical research limitations imposed by availability of sources and time constraints.

Several important assumptions have been made and are basic to the study. The primary, underlying assumption is that effective leadership skills can be learned. An earlier Department of the Army pamphlet on senior leaders made this basic assumption quite clear by stating, "This view that leadership skills rest upon understanding has an important implication. It means that leadership skills can be learned."¹³ If these skills can be learned, then the study of them, as they are effectively applied, must be conducted. In the words of the DA pamphlet, "The object is to provide an effective way of thinking about leadership at the level of the senior commander."¹⁴ On the senior leadership level, this thesis provides a way of thinking about leadership by investigating historical situations which demonstrate leadership concepts and, therefore, complements the leadership development process of self-study, education, training, and experience.¹⁵

Another assumption crucial to this thesis is that the study of historical examples has value for similar, contemporary problems and analysis. In brief, one can learn from the lessons of history.¹⁶

The recent U.S. Army emphasis on using historical examples at all levels of military schooling and increasing the amount of time devoted to the study of military history at all levels serves to reinforce this assumption and promote its acceptance Army-wide. Certainly, it now enjoys official sanction.

Advance Outline

The remaining chapters of this thesis are organized into: a broad overview of the organization and employment of the U.S. Army in World War II; a chapter on each of the three senior leaders; a chapter on general conclusions, implications and recommendations; and notes on major sources.

Chapter 2 is entitled Setting the Stage and provides an introduction to the common environment of the commanders analyzed in this thesis. It presents a broad overview of the major campaigns in France and Germany in 1944 and 1945 and describes, in appropriate detail, command relationships, unit organization and other information necessary to provide a complete picture. It discusses equipment, doctrine, personalities and other information that it would otherwise be necessary to repeat in the remaining chapters. The chapter also examines the overall leadership climate that was established and maintained by General Eisenhower in the European Theater throughout 1944 and 1945.

Chapter 3, Uncommonly Normal, is an historical analysis of the demonstrated leadership attributes, as they apply to the conceptual framework, of General William Hood Simpson, Commander of the Ninth U.S. Army, during selected phases of its operations in 1944-1945. Chapter 4, In the Eye of the Hurricane, is an

historical analysis of the demonstrated leadership attributes of Major General Troy Houston Middleton, Commander of VIII Corps, during its combat operations from the Normandy beachhead to the close of the war. Chapter 5, American Rommel, is an historical analysis of the demonstrated leadership attributes of Major General John Shirley Wood, Commander of the 4th Armored Division, during selected phases of its operation in 1944.

Chapter 6 discusses general conclusions which can be drawn from the investigation in Chapters 3 through 5 and suggests some areas for further research and investigation. The thesis concludes with some notes on those sources which were most useful to the examination.

The study of these three men who were in some ways very different from each other, reduces their leadership to the four basic elements outlined in the Methodology section but attempts to preserve, for each of them, that uniqueness of personality and spirit which marked them as individuals. Each man commanded his unit in his own personal style and interacted with his staff using his own methods and procedures. All were successful in combat and were respected by their seniors and subordinates, but for their own individual characters and accomplishments. While the separate aspects of senior-level leadership can be broken-down, categorized and scrutinized, it would be wrong to oversimplify and leave the reader with the impression that successful leadership is merely a matter of following a check list. However, it is equally wrong and, perhaps, a greater error to refuse to investigate or examine this important subject by professing it to be purely an art whose successful practitioners must

always be those who are born with some mystical power to influence others. Although "no satisfying, universal answers are yet available to show how these ... individuals have ... been successful",¹⁷ the systematic study of successful senior-level leaders remains a worthwhile and necessary task for those who may one day lead American soldiers into combat, as Simpson, Middleton and Wood did on the battlefields of Europe in World War II. History provides the means to investigate these leaders and analyze the dimensions of their leadership, as it demonstrates its capacity, when properly used to illustrate, to clarify and to teach.

NOTES

¹U.S. Department of the Army, FM 100-5, Operations, 1982, p. 2-5.

²Boyd M. Harris, "Perspective on Leadership, Management and Command", Military Review 64 (February 1984): 49.

³MAJ Robert Fitton, Interview with principal author, FM 22-999, Senior-Level Leadership, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 3 November 1983.

⁴Thomas Stone, "He Had the Guts to Say No: A Military Biography of General William Hood Simpson", (Ph.D. Dissertation, Rice University, 1974), p. 4.

⁵Conquer: The Story of the Ninth Army, 1944-1945, (Nashville, Tenn.: Battery Press, 1980), pp. 117-118.

⁶Ibid., p. 304.

⁷U.S. Department of the Army, FM 22-100, Military Leadership, 1983, pp. 2-4, 2-5.

⁸Franklin Institute, Art and Requirements of Command, Volume I, Summary Report. (Philadelphia: Systems Science Department of the Franklin Institute, 1967), p. 16.

⁹FM 22-100, pp. 5-1, 5-9, 5-10.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 2-4.

¹¹MAJ Robert Fitton, Interview with Thesis Committee, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2 November 1983.

¹²Fitton. Interview. 2 November 1983.

¹³U.S. Department of the Army, DA Pam 200-15, Leadership at Senior Levels, 1968, p. 4.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁵FM 22-100, p. 1.

¹⁶John E. Jessup, Jr. and Robert W. Coakley, A Guide to the Study and Use of Military History. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), p. 14.

¹⁷James Mrazek, The Art of Winning Wars. (New York: Walker and Company, 1968), p. 113.

CHAPTER 2

SETTING THE STAGE - THE U.S. ARMY IN EUROPE,

1944 - 1945

Introduction

By 1944 the U.S. Army had evolved into a superbly equipped, highly mobile force of ninety divisions formed from 1292 battalions of infantry, armor, artillery and other combat arms aggregating 2,282,000 ground combat soldiers of the Army's total strength of 7,004,000.¹ Although both the Germans and Russians mobilized more manpower, the American blend of industrial might and nearly complete motorization allowed this relatively lean organization to be sufficient for the task of leading the Allied drive to defeat the war-weary German forces in northwest Europe, while simultaneously tightening the noose around the Japanese empire in the Pacific. Indeed, early projections of American troop requirements were continually revised downward:

Early in 1944, the projected enlisted strength was revised slightly downward, to 5,955,000, but officers were incorporated into the Troop Basis to project an army aggregating 7,700,000. The Army actually grew ... to some 8,300,000; but the increase over the Troop Basis did not alter the organization of the force, because the added numbers developed mainly in men unassigned to specific units, in replacement centers and depots, reassignment centers and hospitals - the "invisible hordes of people" as General McNair described them, "going here and there but seemingly never arriving."²

Sixty-one divisions, organized into five armies totaling fifteen corps were eventually needed in northwest Europe. Their ranks filled with 1,700,000 ground combat troops by "E" day.³

The brunt of the fighting across France and Germany in 1944-45 was borne by General Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group which included General Courtney Hodges' "grimly intense" First Army, General George Patton's "noisy and bumptious" Third Army and General William Simpson's "breezy" Ninth Army.⁴ Flanked by Field Marshal Montgomery's 21 Army Group to the north and General Devers' 6th Army Group to the south, Bradley's soldiers were able to attack across the channel into Normandy, break out of this lodgement and sweep across France, survive a violent German counterattack in the Ardennes, breach the Rhine in several places and race across central Germany to the Elbe, linking up with the Russians driving west - all within eleven months.

Although not totally perfect in organization, equipment or doctrine, the American Army's accomplishments, nevertheless, bear tribute to the remarkable resilience, industry, ingenuity and leadership of this unique nation. One observer has summarized these traits as "an excellent improvisation":

Probably the best general conclusions which can be made about the American Army of 1944-1945 is that it was an excellent improvisation. Considering that virtually the entire Army had to be created from next to nothing during the period 1940 to 1944, the accomplishment was remarkable. Within this framework, the flaws in the American Army tend to fade. When compared with the flaws in several other armies, they virtually vanish. Certain specific conclusions may be drawn from the American experience.

The principle of total motorization had proven a definite asset, perhaps far beyond the expectations of the men who first proposed it. American units operating quickly and efficiently over incredibly poor roads, accomplished feats of motor transport unheard of in European military experience. Modularization also proved a considerable advantage, streamlining ... the repair and maintenance requirements of the entire army.

easing command considerations ... and facilitating the shipment of units to all areas of the world.

American inventiveness, mechanical aptitude and initiative proved of tremendous value in combat ... American industrial might must also be considered, particularly in its ability to come up with workable arms, a copious supply of communications equipment and a continuous flood of ammunition. The fact that the Army utilized these materials to best advantage ... was an additional benefit of American ingenuity.⁵

Improvisation or not, the American Army of 1944-45, led by excellent senior leadership, proved to be an outstanding general purpose combat force.

Organization of the U.S. Army, 1940-1945

From the robust but ponderous "square" division of World War I, General Lesley McNair, Chief of Staff of General Headquarters until 1942 and then Commander of the Army Ground Forces, fashioned a more mobile, leaner "triangular" division as the building block for the U.S. Army of World War II. Based upon echelons of three units (i.e. squads, platoons, companies, battalions and regiments), this organization was influenced by the concepts of pooling, motorization and standardization.

McNair's passion for leanness and flexibility led to the adoption of a basic unit configuration which would include only those elements which would always be needed by that unit. Other resources would be maintained in a centralized "pool" to be attached to the division whenever necessary:

... divisions were not assigned organic reconnaissance, anti-aircraft, anti-tank, or tank elements. These specialized forces would be assigned to corps and army level "pools", and parceled out to the divisions as necessary ... As things turned out, ... it was another matter entirely ... Usually, most divisions were

permanently assigned tank battalions as well [as tank destroyer and anti-aircraft artillery]. In one case pooling was totally abandoned: the reconnaissance detachments. The one area where pooling worked particularly well was the artillery ... By 1944, the concept of the pool had undergone serious reconsideration and, though officially remaining unchanged, had been tacitly done away with ... Indeed, by the end of the war, most of the pool consisted of artillery. The bulk of the additional formations had been permanently assigned to divisions.⁶

More successful than pooling was the decision to generously supply most formations with motor transport, eliminating all horse-drawn transport:

Very early in the preparations for World War II, the Army decided on full motorization ... While a motorized army was considerably more expensive than a horse-drawn one, there were several advantages which overrode the expense ... Perhaps the two most important considerations ... were the benefits in combat [speed] and the questions of shipping [fodder requiring more shipping than motor supplies.] ... The American infantry division was, it should be noted, only "semi-" motorized. It contained, however, no horse-drawn vehicles. All heavy weapons and equipment were carried on motor vehicles ... [and] ... because of the abundance of motor transport in the American Army, the division was, for all practical purposes, completely motorized.⁷

The addition of six quartermaster truck companies could complete the motorization of an infantry division, but most units found such attachments unnecessary, posting advances of over thirty miles a day by "simply [piling] its infantry on its howitzers, tanks and tank destroyers."³ The mobility gained by this concept was the American Army's most dominant characteristic in northern Europe in 1944-45.

The third concept, standardization, developed from McNair's conviction that a standardized, general purpose force, modified only as deemed necessary by the local theater commander, would prove a more effective, efficient and flexible organization than an army

containing any number of highly specialized, and possibly wasteful, units:

To promote flexibility it was very early decided that all formations of a given type would always be identically organized. In effect, whether assigned to a division organically, or whether part of a "pool", a medium tank battalion was exactly like every other medium tank battalion and so on through the army. Organization, training, equipment, doctrine and procedure were to be identical in all formations of the same type ... [there were] no peculiar internal arrangements to cause the division commander headaches. (Consider for a moment the situation in the German Army, where there existed simultaneously as many as seven different infantry regimental organizations!) ... [Standardization] greatly facilitated supply and maintenance arrangements ... [permitting] supplies to be made tailor-made in "units of fire" [i.e., the basic load of ammunition for a "type" battalion for one day's combat] ... Finally, [it] reduced the amount of time that newly assigned personnel required to adjust to their new units.⁹

Of the 89 divisions which eventually emerged from these concepts, 66 were infantry divisions (including 18 National Guard divisions, half of these serving in Europe)¹⁰ consisting of a base organization of three infantry regiments, division artillery, an engineer battalion and division trains.¹¹ Forty-two infantry divisions formed the bulk of the U.S. Army in Europe in 1944-45:¹²

The infantry division which ... emerged from McNair's work and which remained the basic division of World War II was built around twenty-seven rifle companies totaling 5,184 men. Each rifle company consisted of three rifle platoons and a weapons platoon. The rifle platoon consisted of three rifle squads of twelve men each, armed with ten M-1 (Garand) rifles, one automatic rifle, and one model 1903 Springfield rifle. The weapons platoon contained two .30 caliber light machine guns, three 60mm mortars, three anti-tank rocket launchers, and one .50 caliber machine gun primarily for anti-aircraft defense.

Three rifle companies were grouped with a heavy weapons company [162 officers and men with 81mm mortars, .30 and .50 caliber machine guns, and rocket launchers] to form an infantry battalion ... Attached to the battalion headquarters company was an anti-tank platoon [with 57mm

anti-tank guns] ... Three infantry battalions plus a headquarters company (which included six 105mm howitzers), a service company and an anti-tank company ... made up an infantry regiment ... Three infantry regiments plus ... three artillery battalions comprised the combat elements of a division, supported by division engineer, signal, ordnance, quartermaster, medical and military police units, with a headquarters company and a mechanized reconnaissance troop.¹³

Despite the "pooling" concept, each of the infantry division commanders in Europe by 1945 controlled considerably more than 15,000 troops and often had more units in a "permanently attached" status within their units than organic formations. For example, the 1st Infantry Division on 1 March 1945, had twelve company and battalion sized combat units attached to it more or less permanently, opposed to nine organic formations of battalion and regimental size.¹⁴

Supplementing the sturdy infantry divisions in Europe were the speed and power of fifteen armored divisions.¹⁵ Basically of two types, an earlier, "heavy" armored division of two tank regiments and one infantry regiment, and a later "combat command" armored division with equal numbers of tank, infantry and artillery battalions, the U.S. armored division was able to field 200 percent more armored fighting vehicles than its German Panzer Division counterpart while using only 35 percent of the authorized manpower strength.¹⁶ Only two units, the 2d and 3d Armored Divisions retained the old configuration while the majority of armored formations were redesigned in 1944:

As designed in 1940-42, American armored divisions numbered 14,620 men with 4,848 in tank units, 2,389 in armored infantry and 1,127 in armored artillery ... In 1943, however, the armored division was remodeled to comprise an equal number of infantry and tank battalions, three of each, plus the three artillery battalions.

Regiments now disappeared from the armored division ... with no fixed regimental formations present ... additional battalions of tanks, infantry and artillery could readily be added or detached ... as any situation required. To handle these flexible arrangements, armored division headquarters included two "combat commands", each a subheadquarters to which the division commander might assign such task forces as he chose.¹⁷

As with the infantry units, armored divisions frequently contained as many permanently attached units as organic formations. In December 1944, the 4th Armored Division, in addition to its organic tank, infantry, artillery (three battalions each), engineer and reconnaissance battalions, had permanently attached to it six artillery battalions, an anti-tank battalion and an engineer bridge company, as well as miscellaneous combat support units of various sizes.¹⁸ The total strength, minus attachments, of this mobile, flexible armored force was set at 10,937 men and a total of 263 tanks (seventeen tanks per company).¹⁹ The "heavy" armored divisions had 390 tanks but many of these were light tanks, of doubtful utility against the powerful German panzers.²⁰

With this organization, developed rather late in the war, the U.S. Army conducted the campaigns in northwest Europe in 1944-45. That it proved adequate to the task is a recognition of the vision of men like General McNair as well as a tribute to the adaptability of the leaders who commanded the units in combat.

U.S. Army Equipment, 1944-45

The equipment used by the American infantryman, tankman, and artilleryman reflected both the strengths and the weaknesses of an organization whose guiding principles were mobility, flexibility and standardization. Blessed with an excellent infantry rifle and superior

artillery, the U.S. Army compensated for an inferior tank by capitalizing on its mobility and greater numbers.

The American infantryman was issued the finest shoulder weapon of World War II, the .30 caliber, semi-automatic M-1 Garand, a nine and a-half pound, gas operated rifle whose eight round magazine could be reloaded quickly enough to allow the soldier to fire 24 rounds per minute.²¹ Compared to the German rifleman's bolt-operated Mauser 98K, the M-1 was superior in all respects. In other infantry weapons, however, the American soldier was not as fortunate. Much of the M-1's advantage in firepower was overcome by the liberal German issue of machine pistols (the MP38 could fire 500 rounds per minute) to its soldiers. The World War I designed U.S. machine guns were embarrassingly outclassed by the German MG34 and MG42, excellently designed weapons which could fire 850 to 1200 rounds per minute²² versus the ponderous U.S. M1919's 500 rounds per minute.²³ Only the slow but powerful U.S. M2 .50 caliber machine gun provided praiseworthy service. The Germans possessed an advantage in their 120mm mortar, although their 50mm and 81mm mortars were matched by the U.S. 60mm and 81mm weapons, and they outmatched the puny U.S. 57mm anti-tank gun with their superb 75mm and 88mm PAK 40/43.²⁴ The 47mm Panzerfaust and 88mm Panzerschreck were both superior against armored targets to the 2.36 inch U.S. "bazooka".²⁵ But the infantryman's problem was minor compared to that confronting the American tankier.

At the time of the Normandy invasion the U.S. main battle tank, the 30 ton M4 Sherman, was clearly inferior to the German PzKw V Panther tank and the monstrous PzKw VI Tiger. "Germany's

Panther tanks carried long-barrelled, high-muzzle-velocity 75's and her Tiger's fired 38's, but the largest gun on an operational American tank was still a short-barrelled, low-muzzle-velocity 75."²⁶ Although the Sherman possessed a few advantages over the German tanks, the U.S. tankers had to ultimately rely on greater numbers in tank encounters:

The forty-three ton Panther excelled the [33 ton] Sherman slightly in speed - 43.5 to 41 kilometers ... per hour; considerably in armor - with 120mm front armor [to 31mm for the Sherman]; and almost decisively in the superior muzzle velocity and range of its long-seventy caliber - 75 over the Sherman's short 75mm gun. The Sherman had better mechanical endurance, not only in its engine but in a rubber-block track with about five times the life expectancy of the Germans' steel track; but endurance became irrelevant if the superior Panther knocked the Sherman out early. On solid ground, the Sherman had slightly better maneuverability, but the Panther with wider treads and superior flotation reversed this advantage whenever the ground was at all soft. The Sherman had greater rapidity of fire because it was equipped with a gyrostabilizer and a powered traverse. Nevertheless, the usual dependance of the Sherman in combat against the Panther had to be upon greater numbers of tanks, unless the Sherman's crew were exceptionally skillful tank tacticians. With numbers, Shermans could surround a Panther and hit its vulnerable flanks and rear ... ²⁷

The situation for the U.S. tankers was frequently worsened by the German "stiffening of the panzers by detachments of fifty-six-ton, and eventually larger, PzKw VI's, the Tiger, ungainly but frightening vehicles with an 88mm gun."²⁸ American tank destroyers, the M10 and M18 with high velocity 75mm guns and later the M36 with a 90mm gun, could defeat most German tanks with well placed shots, but, lacking armor protection, were generally failures in their intended role of seeking out tanks and destroying them. The heavier M26 Pershing tank mounting a long-barrelled 90mm gun did not

appear in sufficient numbers to significantly influence armored combat.

American artillery proved to be the great advantage of the U.S. Army and was instrumental in providing the massed firepower which infantry and armor weapons lacked. Available in abundant supply and usually well-stocked with ammunition, U.S. artillery weapons were linked by a superior fire control system which facilitated the massing of fires at the critical point:

With American tanks afflicted by marked shortcomings, and the tank in general moving less to supplant the infantry-artillery team than to join as a new partner with it, perhaps the outstanding element in the American arsenal was the artillery. To both the tank-and-infantry team and the marching fire advances, artillery support was essential. For this war ... the Army had available an excellent American weapon for divisional artillery, ready for mass production, the 105mm howitzer ... Tests of an American 105, of a split-trail carriage for it, and of better recoil mechanisms, continued through the interwar years, to produce the gun that became "The work-horse of the Army" in 1941-45, a howitzer capable of firing thirteen different kinds of shells at a rate of twenty rounds a minute, with maximum range of 12,000 yards.

For heavier work, the 105 was supplemented with 155mm guns ("Long Tom's"), 8 inch howitzers, 240mm howitzers and 8 inch guns. Increasingly, there were also self-propelled guns.²⁹

Excellent communications equipment tied the entire system together and allowed even a single forward observer "to request and receive the fires of all the batteries within range of a target in a single concentrated barrage."³⁰ The effects of massing the fires of the entire artillery battalion, or even of several battalions, upon a single target was awesome to behold and devastating to endure. The Germans grew to fear and respect the American artillery and gave this branch much credit for Allied

gains. "On all fronts artillery caused more than half the casualties of World War II battles; but the artillery was the American Army's special strong suit."³¹

The advantages which American equipment held over German weapons in Europe in 1944-45 focused on an excellent rifle, superior artillery and, in good weather, tactical air support:

The Garand .30 caliber M1 semi-automatic rifle was the best standard infantry should arm of the Second World War ... The standard American medium artillery weapon, the 105mm howitzer ... and every other type of American artillery was multiplied by the best equipment and techniques of any army for fire direction, observation and coordination. By 1944, the U.S. Army Air Forces had more than caught up with the early lead of the German Luftwaffe in quality of airplanes and tactics for direct support of the ground battle, though air-ground teamwork still left something to be desired.³²

Despite these advantages and other American technological developments which occurred throughout the war, the decisive factor proved to be the overwhelming quantity of U.S. equipment which flooded northern Europe during the last year of the war:

Subsequent developments of American military technology included the proximity fuse, shaped charges, bazookas and recoilless rifles, improved landing craft for amphibious war and the DUKW truck that could move ... on water as well as ... roads, and mobile, flexible fuel pipelines ... Despite these impressive qualitative advances, however, the American emphasis remained on quantity of materials ... The quantity of American weapons, then, overwhelmed enemies with sheer weight of firepower. The lavish quantity of American equipment and transport gave American forces assured logistical support in any theater of war. Lavish quantity in transport and supplies also gave American forces their immense advantages in strategic and tactical mobility.³³

German equipment may have been superior in some notable aspects, but American industrial production, untouched and unthreatened by enemy attack, continued to pour forth a stream of

rugged, serviceable equipment against which the Germans could ultimately only achieve brief, localized success.

U.S. Army Doctrine, 1944-45

U.S. Army doctrine for conducting the campaigns in northern Europe in 1944-45 was not unlike that used in the last days of the First World War. Indeed, "infantry assault doctrine of World War II was based on the covering fire tactics of the final phase of World War I:"³⁴

An American twelve-man rifle squad had a two man scout section (Able), a four man fire section (Baker), which included the squad's automatic rifle, and a five man maneuver-and-assault section (Charlie). Customarily, the squad leader would advance with Able to locate the enemy. He would then signal his assistant leader in Baker to fire, according to whatever plan the situation suggested. Thereupon, he would join Charlie for the maneuver to exploit the cover laid down by Baker's fire.³⁵

In actual combat, it was not uncommon for the squad leader to be pinned down with the forward elements, causing the resulting uncoordinated assault to bog down and fall apart.³⁶ One remedy was the habitual assignment of tanks to any sizeable infantry formation which allowed the tanks to take "on centers of resistance, while the infantry eliminated anti-tank weapons" and other enemy infantry.³⁷ The 4th Armored Division relied heavily upon this tactic during the Lorraine campaign, sending small teams of tanks supported by infantry forward "to deal with a strongpoint of enemy resistance which was holding up the advance of the main body or to clean out a village or hold high ground to safeguard [an] advance."³⁸ The 102d Infantry division reported that, in the Rhineland and during the drive into central Germany, "the usual method of attack across the open ground was for the infantry and tanks to work closely together.

Small groups of infantrymen were assigned to each tank with instructions never to desert it and to coordinate their actions with that of the tank. This system worked to perfection."³⁹

Another method of advance used by all types of units capitalized on the normally abundant supply of ammunition. This was known as the "marching fire offensive":

A seemingly more old-fashioned method of advance also found growing favor and proved effective ... [this was known as] ... "marching fire offensive," wherein casualties might be great but results could be too. All the infantry moved forward together in a thick skirmish line, generally with close tank support. Browning Automatic Rifles and light air-cooled machine guns went with them. Everybody fired at every possible resistance within reach. All the large weapons that could be mustered laid down a supporting fire. Once again, as in older armies, every man drew psychological support from the mass of his comrades, and once again the enemy felt the psychological shock of seeing a fearsome mass move against him. If the method was old-fashioned, automatic weapons, tanks, and modern artillery coordination could once again make it effective.⁴⁰

The psychological support the men drew from each other is, perhaps, more important than the high volume of fire placed upon the enemy, for as S.L.A. Marshall discovered it was a relatively few number of riflemen who provided the aggressive fire and maneuver necessary to make the tactical doctrine function and "infantry fire and infantry maneuver both had to depend on a much smaller number of men than the tactical system implied."⁴¹ But the fact that "marching fire" was perceived as producing more friendly casualties caused some units to be reluctant to employ it, thereby reducing its impact in the theater.

Moving above squad level, the doctrine at division level called for the establishment of regimental combat teams (infantry divisions) or combat commands (armored divisions) as the basic

maneuver element. The regimental combat team "afforded a method of decentralizing control during fast moving situations. Each combat team was built around an infantry regiment from which it inherited its numerical designation."⁴² To this base were usually added: an artillery battalion; a combat engineer platoon; a tank company; and other supporting units such as signal, medical and ordnance. In theory, these regimental combat teams would be dispatched to accomplish some appropriate task in semi-autonomy. In practice, the division commander usually exercised tighter control over his teams in order to better apply the full power of the division against the enemy.

The combat command of the armored division was similar in theory, but was formed on a triumvirate of a tank battalion, an infantry battalion and a field artillery battalion as well as supporting units. The 4th Armored Division recorded the organization and usual employment doctrine of its combat commands in 1944-45:

The 4th Armored Division operated essentially as contemplated in FM 17-100. Combat commands A and B were used for the attack while CCR was used essentially to control the movement of the reserve and was seldom used for combat ... Combat commands usually consisted of an armored infantry battalion, a tank battalion, two light and one medium artillery battalion, one reconnaissance troop and engineers. A medical company and a maintenance company (the same one each time) supported each assault combat command ... usually an artillery group, a TD battalion, an AAA battalion and an infantry combat team was attached to the division. The group usually consisted of one light artillery battalion and two 155mm howitzer battalions. This permitted two light battalions and one medium battalion to support each assault combat command. The infantry combat team was used for mopping up behind the combat commands, and to protect bridgeneads. Seldom was a foot infantry battalion attached to a combat command. Tank destroyers were used with combat commands, to protect division installations and to escort trains."

All of these formations emphasized the doctrine of using firepower, usually artillery, whenever possible instead of manpower. In a deliberate attack of a position the normal procedure was for the artillery to "initiate its preparatory barrage ... Depending on what the 'priority' target was, the barrage would periodically lift and switch to new targets. [It would fire at] German artillery positions ... [and] ... other targets included enemy command posts and centers of communications, road junctions, and enemy routes to approach the front line. When the barrage ... was lifted, all batteries were responsible for responding to the calls of their forward observers."⁴⁴ the 102d Infantry Division official history describes a typical "prep" prior to an assault on a north German town:

Beginning at H minus 10 minutes, six battalions fired five rounds per gun per minute into the western outskirts of Gereonsweiler. From H-hour to H plus 15 minutes, corps artillery kept the commanding ground around the objective under constant fire. At H plus 15 minutes the fire falling on the western edge of the objective lifted and the six artillery battalions rolled a barrage through the town. At 1100 hours, the ground forces moved forward.⁴⁵

Any enemy units located in the "western outskirts of Gereonsweiler" that day would have received approximately 500 rounds of artillery every minute for what would undoubtedly seem like an eternity to those forced to endure it. It is small wonder that the German soldier held his opponent's artillery in awesome respect.

In favorable weather, close air support added to the destruction which the American Army could bring down on the German defenses.

The use of fighter-bombers as aerial artillery to assist ground forces was accepted doctrine in World War II. By 1944,

the standard Allied practice was to assign squadrons to circle behind the front on-call, in so-called "cab ranks". When ground forces radioed coordinates for a strike, the fighter squadrons would attack and return to base for rearming, while others assumed their cab rank stations. The key here was communication. Only with extensive pre-planned radio codes and coordinate designation could ground support be counted on.⁴⁶

Additionally, the Army Air Forces were employed to interdict any enemy forces or supplies which were moving toward Allied forces, to delay the habitual German counterattack, to strike forces already in contact and generally disrupt the enemy through aggressive attacks on roads, rail, towns and river traffic.⁴⁷

This lavish use of firepower proved to be a cornerstone of U.S. doctrine in northern Europe. An example of such free use of ammunition can be seen in one infantry division's ammunition expenditures during a time of relative supply austerity when, in less than ten days of attack in the Rhineland, the division "expended 24,000 rounds of 105mm ammunition, 8,184 rounds of 60mm mortar ammunition and 1,712,550 rounds of small arms ammunition aggregating a total of 1007.5 tons."⁴⁸ This high volume of fire from a seemingly inexhaustible supply of weapons was able to make the U.S. Army's unspectacular but sound doctrine unbeatable by the German Army of 1944-45.

U.S. Army Leadership Climate. European Theater. 1944-45

U.S. Army leadership in the last two years of the war was built around a core of 15,000 pre-war regular officers to which had been added approximately 100,000 National Guard officers, 10,000 direct commissioned officers, 130,000 from the Officer Reserve Corps and 200,000 Officer Candidate School graduates. "A typical infantry

regiment was officered more or less as follows: the colonel, the executive officer and one battalion commander were regular army; one battalion commander was a reserve officer, and one came from the National Guard. Probably two-thirds of the company commanders were OCS graduates; the other one-third consisted of Guardsmen with a few reservists."⁴⁹ Thus, the burden of small unit leadership at the tactical level was borne, for the most part, by officers who had been commissioned after the beginning of the war and who were not products of the pre-war army staff and school system. But above regimental level, at the division and higher headquarters echelon which "demanded leadership and managerial qualities of an exceptional kind", the majority of commanding officers were regular army soldiers including many "who were ... exceptional in their skills, as well as in character and decisiveness."⁵⁰ That these officers performed well is a tribute to the Army staff and school system as well as to the judgment of the men who selected them:

Even those officers of high rank who enjoyed a fairly large scope for the exercise of their individual abilities reflected the qualities of the pre-war staff and school system. For most of them had long since been selected by their chiefs and by the instructors in the schools as men who would exercise the highest responsibilities if war should come. Not only did the staff and school system train a corps of management and command experts; the system and the chiefs of staff who presided over it ... had succeeded also in recognizing men of more than routine competence and selecting and grooming them early. The Eisenhowers, Bradleys and Pattons did not catapult to the top of the Army by accident; their potential had been perceived and cultivated when they were still junior officers.⁵¹

The senior American leadership in Europe in 1944-45, headed by Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, had learned important lessons and "gained invaluable experience in battlefield

management"⁵² during the early campaigns in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. Eisenhower, especially, learned hard lessons on the value of aggressiveness and team play in his first test of coalition warfare in Tunisia. The poor performance of the U.S. II Corps and of its commander, General Fredendall, demonstrated to Eisenhower that, although pre-war "friendship counted for much",⁵³ it must not interfere with the relief of any officer who proved indecisive or a failure. Ike personally charged Patton to quickly relieve any officer who showed signs of failing and he repeated this advice to Gerow (V Corps Commander).⁵⁴

Fredendall, whose 200 engineers labored for three weeks tunneling II Corps headquarters into an inaccessible mountainside far from the front in Tunisia, showed Ike the value and necessity for senior leadership to be aggressively forward during the critical phase of any operation and for these men not to become wedded to their CP's.⁵⁵ A perceived lack of aggressiveness or a tendency for a commander to spend too much time at his command post was justification for relief of the officer during later campaigns in Europe and most division, and even corps, commanders kept their command posts "never far from the firing lines."⁵⁶

In addition to aggressiveness, Eisenhower valued "team play", a spirit of cooperation between Allied commands which would facilitate his job of waging coalition warfare. Once again, the hapless Fredendall provided an early object lesson, as he was despised by his British counterparts for his outspokenly anti-British attitude.⁵⁷ The Supreme Commander could not tolerate such an attitude and placed a high value on officers who, like the steady Bradley,

"never caused [him] one moment of worry [and who have] the respect of all [their] associates, including the British officers."⁵⁸

Maintaining perfect cooperation among his Allied subordinates, including some whose egos bruised easily, was not always a simple task for Eisenhower. When it became necessary for Eisenhower to assign all of the Ninth and most of the First U.S. Armies to Field Marshal Montgomery's command, a man whose "personality ... could be described as cocky nearly to the point of arrogance,"⁵⁹ during the critical days of the Ardennes counteroffensive, Ike felt obliged to write a personal message to the U.S. commanders concerned to exhort them to "respond cheerfully and efficiently to every instruction [the Field Marshal] gives."⁶⁰ That they complied is a recognition of Eisenhower's influence as much as it is a statement of the officers' professionalism.

The northern European campaigns of 1944-45 were clearly marked by Eisenhower's influence and leadership. In addition to setting an example for his subordinates to follow, Ike personally selected division, corps and army commanders (although he often sought the advice of Marshall, Bradley, or SHAEF Chief of Staff, Bedell Smith):

Eisenhower ... evaluated every division commander coming into ETO. If he did not know the man he would discuss him with Bradley or Smith, and if any one of the three generals disapproved, Eisenhower would so inform Marshall and a new commander for the division would be appointed. Eisenhower made every decision on moving generals up from division to corps, or from corps to army, command.⁶¹

Marshall facilitated this process by agreeing that Eisenhower "need take no commander unless he had full confidence in him."⁶² Subordinate commanders had little latitude in

selecting their respective subordinates. For example, General Simpson, Ninth Army Commander, was allowed only to select three officers for his corps commanders from a list of four names previously approved by Eisenhower.⁶³

Eisenhower visited his field commanders frequently but "did not interfere with their conduct of operations ... usually content[ing] himself with giving [them] a pat on the back and telling them to keep up the good work."⁶⁴ General Raymond S. McLain, XIX Corps Commander, has written his opinion of how far down the ranks Eisenhower's influence was projected when he wrote, "As a corps commander, I frequently felt his personal influence, and I know, too, that my division commanders and even some of my regimental and battalion commanders, on occasion, also felt his personal presence and influence."⁶⁵ The extent of this influence can also be gauged by the celerity with which corps and army commanders relieved their division commanders for timidity, early failure or "seriously lacking aggressiveness in [their] leadership" - all traits stressed by the Supreme Commander.⁶⁶ During the tough fighting in the Cotentin Peninsula, several division commanders were relieved, including one whose unit was engaged for only four days⁶⁷ and another whose commander and assistant division commander were both discovered by Ike at the division CP during an operation when, as Bradley writes, "one of them should have been at the front."⁶⁸

The leadership climate established and set by the Supreme Commander in Europe during the final two years of the war was characterized by an attitude of aggressiveness at the senior

American levels under a blanket of teamwork, constantly sought by General Eisenhower at the highest levels. That this climate produced satisfactory results is due, in no small part, to "the 12,000-13,000 officers of the old army [who] had succeeded in preparing themselves mentally for the transition [to war] to a greater extent than the observer of mounted parades and maneuvers ... might have suspected. The officers did so thanks largely to an excellent military school system modeled on European examples and long embedded, somewhat incongruously, within the frontier constabulary."⁶⁹

... it was not the abilities of such individuals [as Marshall, MacArthur, Eisenhower and Bradley], however outstanding, that was most impressive about military command in World War II. It was the extent to which command had become a work of staffs and committees, since no individual could hope to hold together in his own mind all the details of supply, movement, order of battle, terrain and climate, and strategic and tactical problems to enable him to command alone ... the [men] involved had to be men of skill and ability trained in common principles of management and leadership... The Army staff and school system had produced a remarkable supply of such men, of proven ability and proven capacity to cooperate.⁷⁰

Although quick to relieve when failure or inaction threatened an operation, the senior commanders in northern Europe, nevertheless, demonstrated exceptional character and decisiveness while leading their soldiers to victory.

The Enemy: The German Army, 1944-45

The army which the Allies faced in the last two years of the war was not the powerful, confident force which had beaten France in six weeks and had stormed to the gates of Moscow during a furious summer of lightning warfare. Five years of constant war had drained Germany's manpower reserves to a dangerous level and had severely strained combat leadership and other vital resources. But

the German army was far from beaten, thanks to excellent officers, a core of hardened, battle-wise veterans and the focusing of Germany's celebrated efficiency into maximizing the potential of the remaining resources of personnel and equipment:

...the German army in 1944 still could claim to be qualitatively the best army in the world ... Its quality lay in firepower enhanced by superior professional skill among the officers and superior combat savvy and unexcelled courage among the ranks ... The officer corps comprised only 2.86 percent of the German army's strength at the beginning of the ... war and declined in relative strength as the war went on. In contrast, officers represented 7 percent of the overall strength of the American army ... By 1944, however, the Germans could no longer find enough manpower to keep up ... large divisions ... The 1944 German infantry division had only six rifle battalions, in three two-battalion regiments ... Though they reduced the rifle company to two officers and 140 enlisted men, they increased the proportion of automatic weapons ... The increase in automatic weapons gave the German infantry division superior firepower over its American rival despite having about 1,200 fewer combat infantrymen.⁷¹

This advantage in firepower over the Allies, of course, refers to small arms only and ignores the Allied advantage in artillery, numbers of tanks and tactical air support. There remained a shortage of manpower problem in German units despite the ability to produce a large volume of small arms fire.

In the period June through August, 1944, the German armed forces suffered staggering losses of manpower, losing almost a million men out of a total ground force of three million. "Yet, in the same period, 1,427,000 men were put back into the ground forces and in the first quarter of 1945 another 1,626,000 were put into service."⁷² Germany was able to accomplish this rather remarkable feat primarily by calling up those men previously exempt from service. Service schools were stripped of demonstration units in 1944 and the school

cadres themselves followed them to the front in 1945.⁷³ All men between the ages of 16 and 60 were eligible to serve in the Volkssturm, a militia-type organization usually poorly trained and poorly equipped. These units were thrown in late in the war and seldom had heavy weapons.⁷⁴ A final source of manpower was wounded or disabled veterans, the so-called "stomach soldiers" who were also called back to active service. "This mixed bag was the means by which Germany fielded so many new troops. For the able-bodied, training was scanty, at best. For the not-so-able-bodied, they were often mustered with only the most perfunctory training."⁷⁵ Organizing these last manpower reserves into units was also marked by expediency and improvisation:

In addition to generating troops almost faster than they were lost, the number of German divisions and units actually grew until the last few months. However, this was a matter of appearance versus reality. Many units had been reduced to mere cadres during the last months of 1944, with few officers and men ... A more basic way of keeping so many units in the field was to change the organization of the unit. The large-scale organization ... changed little ... The same number of battalions and regiments were in each division. It was at the lowest levels that economies were made ... Another expedient was ... not maintaining units at full strength. If a battalion had three companies ... only two would actually be fielded ... Another way ... was to combine several Kampfgruppen into a new division ... Divisions were raised by fixing a location for a headquarters, assigning a commander ... and sending out a few troops. This was the ultimate in instant divisions [but] they were only a fraction of their nominal strength.⁷⁶

Keeping these last units supplied with equipment during the final months of the war was also a serious problem. Although German production of war materials was not as devastated by Allied air strikes as was assumed by Allied planners, nevertheless production could in no measure meet the demands of both fronts. In mid-1944, at the height of availability, total stocks of German

tanks were approximately 5000. These included about 2300 PzKw IV's, slightly inferior to the U.S. M4 Sherman, and about 2700 of the superior PzKw V Panther and PzKw VI Tiger.⁷⁷ These numbers declined dramatically and consistently thereafter and German forces were usually overwhelmingly outnumbered by Allied armored fighting vehicles:

The steady decline of the tank strength in an armored division [German] is particularly apparent. The Germans varied between decreasing the number of tanks in a company and altering the number of companies in a battalion, or battalions in a regiment ... In 1941 they had, in their line companies, a total of 153 tanks in a division ... in 1944, they were down to 84 and under the 1945 organization, they had only 50 tanks, yet the tank battalion had actually acquired a fifth company. The Waffen-SS Panzer Division ... had 102 tanks in the line companies of the division. The importance of this lies in the fact that it is the company which is the basic command element ... to control 100 tanks in 1943, six companies were needed; to control the same amount required ten companies in 1945.⁷⁸

A continuing problem for the German army was its "astonishing dependence on horse transport."⁷⁹ The inventors of the blitzkrieg continued to rely heavily on the horse as the means for moving supplies and equipment, and German resistance and morale suffered when they compared their "hobbled" army to the superior "... mobility of the motorized American divisions" racing across France.³⁰ In one striking example of this mobility, the Germans were amazed to note that, during the breakout from Normandy, one entire American corps of over 10,000 vehicles passed through a single road in 24 hours.³¹ The German army of 1944-45 could not match this speed and efficiency.

As the Allies pressed ever closer to Germany and eventually entered the Reich, the German army relied increasingly on fortifications in an attempt to stem the advance. After the drive across

France and the bloody battles in Lorraine, the Germans forced the Allies to breach the so-called Siegfried Line, the vaunted West Wall. Never completed as originally planned due to France's rapid collapse in 1940, the final months of 1944 brought on a feverish spurt of activity to strengthen these defenses before the Allies attacked:

The Siegfried Line was actually neither a line nor a wall but an elastic system of fortifications that extended approximately 450 miles from the Swiss frontier to the south to Cleve in Holland ... Specifically, the Siegfried Line consisted of a system of large and small pillboxes and bunkers with three to seven foot walls. All were protected by interlocking fields of fire and reinforced by minefields, fences and lines of obstacles. In addition, there were anti-tank ditches, machine gun nests and concrete or steel rail dragon's teeth. Streams and ravines were turned into anti-tank obstacles ... Lowlying fields and meadows were capable of being flooded to make them impassable ... The bunkers varied in size and accomodated six to forty men ... fire control was directly by sight or observation through periscopes ... sometimes a centrally located CP bunker was built to direct the fire ... It ... contained certain weaknesses ... the limited fields of fire from pillboxes, the inability of most of the boxes to accomodate guns heavier than 37mm, the lack of sufficient density of defenses to prevent well planned infiltration by foot troops, and the difficulty of intercommunications during combat.⁸²

The Allied assault to break through the Siegfried Line, although interrupted by the German Ardennes Offensive, cost an estimated 140,000 Allied casualties and consumed several months - costs which were "tremendous if one looks ... at the relatively small amount of territory taken during the campaign."⁸³ But Hitler's Ardennes Offensive expended the last of the reserves necessary to effectively continue this defense and the Siegfried Line was the last well-prepared system of fortifications the Allies would face.

The defenses in the Rhineland leading to the Rhine river were organized around towns and villages, in an attempt to capitalize

on the concealment and cover offered by urban areas:

The open, cultivated countryside afforded good observation and excellent fields of fire but very little concealment except in urban areas and scattered woods. Consequently, the Germans organized community diggings to supplement deliberate fortifications... They were able to produce a series of formidable obstacles in the form of anti-tank ditches and trenches of all types, as well as thousands of L-shaped foxholes. These diggings were generally in belts around towns which formed the nucleus of the defense. Fields, roads and direct avenues of approach were sowed liberally with anti-tank and anti-personnel mines ... The entire village was ... fortified. Buildings with fields of fire were reinforced with heavy timber, and machine guns and light field pieces were sited inside. Occasionally, the Germans housed a tank this way by driving it through the rear walls and poking its 88 from a break in the fore part of the building.⁸⁴

Eventually, however, the German army was forced out of even these fortifications by the irresistible Allied advance. Unable to muster sufficient mobile forces to properly defend the Rhine, the last great barrier to the Allied drive into central Germany, the German army fought the last month of the war in hastily prepared positions as best it could. Finally, its last major field force in western Germany, Field Marshal Model's Army Group B, trapped in the urban jungle of the Ruhr industrial area by the advancing American columns, the German army began to surrender in ever-increasing numbers. The German army finally died as an effective fighting force along the banks of the Elbe river fleeing the advancing Russians in a last, frenzied attempt to surrender to the western Allies.

An Overview: Campaigns in Northwest Europe, 1944-45

From the initial landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944, until the surrender of German armed forces the following May, the U.S. Army, chiefly the forces of Bradley's 12th Army Group, had established a secure lodgement in Normandy, destroyed German resistance in France

by closing the Falaise Pocket, survived a major counterattack in the Ardennes, cracked through the Siegfried Line defenses, crossed the Rhine in several places and swept into the heart of the enemy's homeland. The major strategic successes comprising the Normandy lodgement, the Falaise Pocket and Rhine crossings.⁸⁵

Following the landings of the U.S. V and VII Corps on D-Day, the Americans began pouring in men and supplies, building up the beachhead area as fast as possible, putting ashore 314,504 men, 41,000 vehicles and 116,000 tons of supplies by 19 June.⁸⁶ After several weeks of bitter fighting among the hedgerows of the bocage country, U.S. forces were able to break out of the Cotentin Peninsula as a result of Bradley's COBRA breakthrough scheme near St. Lo after the carpet bombings of that area on 25 July.⁸⁷ The next month brought a remarkable change from the static warfare near the beachhead and saw Allied forces, including the U.S. First and Third Armies, racing across France:

In four weeks the battle of stalemate in the bocage had changed to one of great mobility as the Allied forces searched out the enemy along the Loire and toward Brest, encircled and destroyed thousands of German troops in a great enveloping movement at Falaise, and dashed to the Seine to cut off the Germans and threaten Paris ... the speed with which the drives were executed and with which the enemy opposition collapsed west of the Seine followed from the unexpected opportunities which Allied commanders had turned to their advantage.⁸⁸

While the First and Third Armies drove eastward, the newly activated Ninth Army assumed responsibility for the VIII Corps' reduction and capture of the fortified port city of Brest on the Brittany Peninsula. Consuming thousands of lives, great quantities of supplies but ultimately yielding no useable port facilities, the decision to capture this stoutly defended citadel has been sharply

criticized as detracting from the destruction of the main German forces farther east:

If the Allied commanders had been able to look into the future and foretell with accuracy the development of the campaign beyond the Seine - the successful pursuit and the capture and opening of ports closer to the scene of the main combat operations, if they could have seen the bitter battle about to develop at Brest, their decision to take that port would have been a mistake.⁸⁹

Stiffening German resistance and lengthening Allied supply lines caused the swift advance of the armies in the east to slow considerably. By mid-September the First Army had swept through Belgium and Luxembourg, and the Third Army had entered Lorraine, driving to the Metz and Nancy areas. Also by this time, Devers' Seventh Army, after landing in the south of France, had driven over 300 miles northward to close on Bradley's southern flank.⁹⁰

From mid-September until the Germans launched their surprise offensive in the Ardennes on 16 December, the Allied armies waged a bloody battle of attrition from Holland in the north, south to Switzerland. A determined enemy and miserable weather combined to cause a relatively modest advance to the Siegfried Line, this system of fortifications being breached only in the Aachen area. By this time, General Simpson's Ninth Army had been inserted into the line north of First Army and south of Field Marshal Montgomery's 21 Army Group. These battles of attrition all along the line:

... were based on the belief that Hitler's forces were still disintegrating and that some lucky push might find a soft spot in the opposing lines which would permit the Allies to advance to the Rhine before the dead of winter. Later, when it became evident that the Germans had reorganized their forces and had succeeded in manning the West Wall fortifications against the Allied offensive, General Eisenhower refused to accept a static policy for the winter, feeling that even minor advances were better than completely defensive tactics.⁹¹

These "minor advances" were still grinding away when the German offensive began in the Ardennes. The Allies, although caught off guard by this unexpected attack, immediately began to shift forces and react to the threat:

On 16 December a major German attack began in the First U. S. Army zone in Luxembourg and Belgium. Acting on orders from higher headquarters, Ninth U.S. Army immediately began to regroup its forces in order to release elements for movement to the south to aid First U.S. Army in holding the German advance. The 7th Armored Division was alerted on 16 December at 1745 hours to move south as soon as possible. An advance party departed at 1930 hours to report to the Commanding General of the VIII Corps ... 92

The VIII Corps commanding general, whose thinly spread forces were bearing the weight of the attack, was using some "common sense soldiering" to position his meager forces to hold critical communication centers, such as St. Vith and Bastogne, until the Allied armies could bring sufficient combat power to bear to stop the German attack.⁹³ To facilitate control of the Allied counter-strokes, Eisenhower attached the Ninth Army and most of the First Army to Montgomery's 21 Army Group north of the bulge created by the German attack. Montgomery retained control of the Ninth Army until 3 April, when Ninth Army reverted to 12th Army Group after the link-up of Ninth and First Armies east of the Ruhr.

Following the defeat of the German Ardennes Offensive, the Allied armies continued to advance on a broad front, piercing the West Wall defenses and closing up to the Rhine.⁹⁴ German losses of men and materiel facilitated the rapid Allied drive, and an outstanding stroke of good fortune allowed First Army units to capture an undestroyed bridge over the Rhine at Remagen on 7 March.⁹⁵

With First Army pouring men and equipment across this last barrier to central Germany, Third and Ninth Armies continued their painstaking preparations for assault crossings of the Rhine:

Like the invasion assault across the English Channel, the plans and preparations for crossing the Rhine consumed much more time than the actual execution of the attack. Giving priority, of course, to other and more immediate needs for planning and supervising current operations, Ninth Army planning for the Rhine crossing was carried on, almost continuously for six and one-half months. The assembling of river-crossing equipment extended over five months, and there were engineer troops training specifically for the task of getting the Army across the Rhine most of the time during that same period. The divisions and supporting troops finally scheduled to make the assault crossing trained and rehearsed their part for two weeks.⁹⁶

The remainder of the Allied armies began crossing the Rhine "with consummate ease and few casualties"⁹⁷ near the end of the month, with Third Army crossing on 23 March, Second British Army on that same day and Ninth Army on 24 March. Seventh Army began crossing preparations on 25 March.

The "last big pursuit of the war"⁹⁸ started for the Allies during the final few days of March when the collapsing German defenses caused Allied commanders to issue orders instructing their units "to conduct relentless pursuit in zone ... phases will be abandoned in favor of taking full advantage of [this] opportunity."⁹⁹ Each of the Allied armies began racing across Germany, slowed only by the masses of prisoners of war and civilian refugees. The link-up of the 1d and 3d Armored Divisions at Lippstadt, east of the Ruhr, sealed-off Germany's last operational field army group in the west in this "Ruhr Pocket".¹⁰⁰ U.S. forces soon reached the pre-arranged demarcation line, the Elbe River, but were not permitted to drive on to capture the ultimate prize, Berlin:

On April 11, the leading units of Simpson's Ninth Army reached the Elbe River at Magdeburg. Simpson got two bridgeheads over the river, one north of Magdeburg on April 12, another to the south on April 13. The one to the north was destroyed by a German counterattack on April 14, but the one to the south held.

Suddenly, it seemed that the Americans had an opportunity to take Berlin. The Russian drive for the capital had not yet begun and Simpson was within fifty miles of the city ... [but] Eisenhower said no.¹⁰¹

The Allies continued to occupy the remainder of western Germany and prepare for occupation duties for the next month. On 7 May 1945, Germany surrendered thereby ending the campaign in northern Europe. The American cost was 104,812 dead and 377,748 wounded.¹⁰²

NOTES

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CHAPTER 3

UNCOMMONLY NORMAL - GENERAL WILLIAM HOOD SIMPSON

Introduction

A tall, raw-boned Texan with an omnipresent smile, General William Hood Simpson guided the United States Ninth Army during its period of combat in the European Theater from the unit's first combat in Brittany in September, 1944, until the Army redeployed back to the United States in July, 1945 for deactivation. Throughout this period, Simpson's steady leadership and evenhanded application of the techniques, principles, and procedures which he and his staff had been taught at the Army's schools earned for him and his unit a reputation for dependability and normalcy that spread to the highest echelons of the Allied command. General of the Army, Omar N. Bradley, remarked about this outstanding characteristic when he compared his three major subordinate units:

Under the tutelage of Lieutenant General William H. Simpson it [the Ninth Army] matured quickly. Unlike the noisy and bumptious Third and the temperamental First, the Ninth remained uncommonly normal.¹

This "uncommonly normal" Ninth Army was both a reflection of and a tribute to the leadership attributes of its commander.

Background and Early Career of General Simpson: 1888-1943

Born and raised in the north-central Texas town of Weatherford,² situated in the shadow of Ft. Worth, Simpson's simple background led to a respect for the frontier values of hard work, determination and a cheerful calmness in the face of adversity. In 1905 he was

appointed to the class of 1909 at the United States Military Academy where he was noted for his cheerfulness if not for his scholastic abilities.³ He is described in the 1909 Howitzer (class yearbook) as "Cheerful Charlie" and the entry includes this description of his usual demeanor, "The slow cracking of that aboriginal visage terminates in a beaming countenance of good will that no glumness can withstand."⁴ This outstanding trait would serve him well in later years and would be remarked upon by virtually all who worked for him.

After four years at West Point during which his poor secondary educational background put him constantly in danger of "falling out through the bottom of the class"⁵, Simpson graduated 101 out of 103 in his class and was assigned to the 6th Infantry Regiment at Fort Lincoln, North Dakota.⁶ He went with his regiment to the Philippines and served there until being posted back to the states in 1912. He and his unit participated in the Mexican Punitive Expedition of 1916-1917 while stationed at El Paso, Texas.⁷

When the United States entered World War I, Simpson, more fortunate than Eisenhower and Bradley who had to remain in the United States, requested and was assigned to a position as aide-de-camp to the commanding general of the 32nd Infantry Division. A unit soon to see combat in France.³ Simpson gained invaluable experience during his unit's seven months of combat, assuming duties as Division Operations Officer (G-3) in August, 1918 after attending the American Expeditionary Force Staff School at Langres.³ He added immeasurably to his knowledge of high-level

staff procedures by serving as the division's Chief of Staff from the Armistice until he returned to the states in June, 1919.¹⁰ After serving through the final months of overseas service as temporary Lieutenant Colonel, Simpson, like his contemporaries, reverted to his permanent rank of Captain on 20 June 1920, but was promoted to Major the following day.¹¹

Simpson's experiences between the wars are similar to those of most of his contemporaries and included battalion and regimental command assignments as well as staff and instructor positions. He commanded the 3d Battalion, 12th Infantry in 1925 after completion of the Infantry Advanced Course and the Command and General Staff School. Upon graduation from the Army War College in 1928, Simpson was assigned to the Military Intelligence Division of the General Staff.¹² Serving next as Professor of Military Science at Pomona College for four years, he returned to the Army War College as an instructor in 1936 and Director of the College's Military Intelligence Division in 1937. Simpson commanded the 9th Infantry Regiment in 1940 before being promoted and moving to Camp Wolters, Texas later that year.¹³ All of these troop, staff and school assignments served to nurture and instill in him a healthy respect for and appreciation of those methods and procedures being developed, taught and employed in the interwar Army and which he would put to effective use in combat.

Promoted to Brigadier General in 1940, Simpson served as Assistant Division Commander of the 2nd Infantry Division, then commanded in rapid succession the 35th Infantry Division, the 30th Infantry Division and, briefly, the XII Corps, all during training

prior to their overseas deployments.¹⁴

General Simpson and the Ninth Army: 1943-1945

General Simpson's association with the Ninth Army actually began when he was appointed Commander of the Fourth United States Army, another training outfit, in September of 1943.¹⁵ The Fourth Army headquarters was formed at double normal strength to permit the subsequent activation of a combat army to be deployed to the European Theater to follow up the cross channel invasion.

Even though General Simpson had formed, trained and activated this army, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that he would lead it into combat. As late as March, 1944, General Eisenhower, preferring seasoned combat leaders to promote to army command, would write to General Marshall that he thought the "coming operations will bring to light some corps commander whose promotion to army command might become obviously desirable. I am thinking of such prospects as Collins, Middleton and Corlett."¹⁶ Nevertheless, Marshall continued to support Simpson's presence at the head of the Army. The Chief of Staff did so not just because Simpson was a capable commander but also, apparently, "to assure generals who trained large formations in the states ... that they did not face dead ends, that they were not altogether excluded from leading their armies into combat" and therefore, he would be an encouragement to a whole class of officers.¹⁷

Simpson deployed the advance party group of the army headquarters to England in May, 1944, and met with Eisenhower on the 16th. The two men renewed an acquaintance that dated back to their Army War College classmate days in 1927-28 and which included meetings during

the Louisiana maneuvers in 1941 and in North Africa in 1943 when Simpson briefly visited Eisenhower's headquarters.¹⁸ It was during this meeting that the Supreme Commander, concerned lest Simpson's unit become confused with the already famous British Eighth Army of North Africa fame, changed the designation of Simpson's army from its original number, the Eighth, to its permanent designation of the Ninth United States Army.¹⁹

While allied plans and efforts for the next three months centered on establishing and expanding a foothold on the European continent, Ninth Army efforts were taken up with moving the unit to England and training it for its introduction to combat. The main Ninth Army command post opened at Bristol, England, on 29 June 1944, the day after the main body arrived in that country.²⁰ Simpson and his headquarters moved to France on 27 August 1944 and the Ninth Army entered combat on 5 September, assuming army command responsibilities for combat operations currently underway in the Brittany peninsula, including VIII Corps' assault on the fortified port city of Brest.²¹ Units under army command at this time included the 2nd, 8th, 29th and 83rd Infantry Divisions, and the 6th Armored Division.²² VIII Corps successfully captured Brest on 13 September 1944, ending Ninth Army's combat operations in Brittany, and a shifting of units to the Allied front in Belgium began shortly thereafter. The Ninth Army's stay in Belgium and Luxembourg was brief, however, since the 12th Army Group Commander, General Bradley, ordered the headquarters to move to Maastricht, Holland, on 14 October. Bradley, anticipating Eisenhower's eventual shifting of a U.S. Army to the control of Field Marshal

Montgomery's British 21 Army Group, reasoned that the relatively green Ninth Army could more easily be spared than the veteran First.²³ By the time the November offensive began on the 16th, Ninth Army consisted of the XIII and XIX Corps, comprising the 29th, 30th, 84th and 102nd Infantry Divisions and the 2nd Armored Division.²⁴

Ninth Army's first major offensive turned into an uninspired, grinding, slugfest through the mud and misery of western German.

The 102nd Infantry Division's official history records:

During an average year, rain falls ... 15 days in November, but in 1944 precipitation was recorded for 28 days. This excessive rain and almost constant cloudiness frequently grounded our air forces. Overcast skies likewise reduced the small amount of evaporation that normally should occur, so that fields became bogs, foxholes turned into wells, trenches into stagnant canals. Vehicles were often roadbound. Unimproved thoroughfares quickly disintegrated. Artillery observation was reduced to short ranges; and infantrymen, directed to guide on various landmarks could not locate them in the mist and fog. Weapons were clogged and jammed with mud in spite of all precautions and always the troops were wet, miserable and cold.²⁵

The weather was not the only enemy during this drive to close up on the Roer River. The enemy, for the first time defending his fatherland, took every advantage of observation and field of fire that the open and cultivated countryside offered, fortifying each small town and village with trenches, mines and anti-tank ditches.²⁶ By the time the Roer was reached at the end of November, Ninth Army was ready for a rest and a chance to recuperate before the assault crossings of the river were undertaken.

Before the Roer could be assaulted, however, Hitler's great Arnhem Offensive began on 16 December 1944. Although not directly

involved in the offensive, Ninth Army divisions began to be quickly detached and sent south under First Army command to help stem the German flow and turn it back. 7th Armored Division, the heroes of St. Vith, started southward on 16 December, followed shortly by the 30th Division that same day.²⁷ Eventually, Ninth Army contributed seven divisions and twenty-eight non-divisional combat units to the fight.²⁸ With the few remaining units, Ninth Army had to pretend to conduct business as usual in order to disguise its "wide, thinly held front".²⁹ Once the bulge had been returned to a straight line, the Ninth could redirect its attention to the Roer River. By this time, however the army had been placed under operational control of Field Marshal Montgomery's British 21 Army Group (effective 20 December 1944).³⁰

The last major obstacle before the Rhine River, the Roer was described by the 102nd Division as:

Neither a deep nor a broad stream. Its normal depth and width in the Division sector varied from three to five feet and from twenty-five to eighty feet, respectively. At this season of the year it was swollen from early thaws and frequent rains, a condition which was aggravated by obstructions in the form of demolished bridges which had impounded stretches of the channel and in some places considerable areas of the adjoining valley floor. The river now had a swift and treacherous current and was much deeper. Furthermore, the terrain on the eastern bank dominated that on the western, and the enemy had the advantage of observation, particularly north of Linnich, where he could see for several miles into the Division area. Most important of all, the enemy controlled the floodgates in one or more of the several dams which were stationed near the head of the river ... By opening these gates he could turn the Roer into a rushing torrent and, in the Division sector could increase its depth to thirty feet and its width to six thousand feet, all in the course of eight hours.³¹

These dams, then, were the keys to any crossing of the river and without their undisputed possession, a successful

crossing could be thwarted. Originally scheduled to take place on 10 February 1945, the attack was postponed by General Simpson on 9 February after an agonizing and fruitless wait for word that the First Army had captured the dams intact. The Germans had sabotaged the dams in such a manner that the high water level would be maintained for an indefinite period.³² Now that the dams had been captured, however, it was only a matter of time before a crossing could be attempted.

General Simpson chose 23 February as the day for the Roer River assault, and the Ninth Army units were successful far beyond any hopes. By 2 March, Ninth Army units had reached the Rhine, killing six thousand Germans and capturing thirty thousand.³³ Now only the Rhine lay between the Ninth Army and the heart of Germany. Montgomery's initial plans for the great crossing of Germany's major river relegated Ninth Army's participation to little more than a sideshow, U.S. units not even intended to be under Ninth Army command.³⁴ However, General Simpson, backed by British Second Army Commander, General Dempsey, protested long and loudly and Montgomery "appeared to comprehend the American position ... he issued new instructions assigning the Rheinberg area to a one-corps assault under the Ninth Army."³⁵ After the big build-up, the actual assault crossings were somewhat anti-climactic and were described in the Ninth Army official history as "more of an engineer construction task than a military tactical maneuver."³⁶ Due to the limited availability of bridge crossing time (the Ninth Army was, by Montgomery's order, limited to only five hours use of the bridge during any twenty-four hour period), it took a full

week for General Simpson to get his entire army across the river.³⁷ Once across, however, the ensuing dash across Germany was phenomenal.

On 30 March 1945, Ninth Army began to drive out of the Rhine bridgehead near Wesel, spearheaded by the 2nd Armored Division. Avoiding the urban jungle of the Ruhr industrial area, within which Field Marshal Model's Army Group B waited, Ninth Army columns rapidly moved through the Muenster Bay area and on 1 April advance elements of the 2nd Armored Division met elements of First Army's 3rd Armored Division at Lipstadt, sealing off the last major group of organized German forces.³⁸ Once this link-up was completed, Ninth Army reverted to 12th Army Group control on 4 April.³⁹ The conduct of operations during this final drive was greatly different from the mud-slogging advance into the Rhineland:

The war was moving swiftly. It was now considered greatly out of the ordinary course of events for a company to stay in any one town for more than two meals. It was a far cry from life along the Roer River, and a curious sense of insecurity developed among the troops. In spite of the ordeals of defensive life a soldier generally had a place to call his own, if only a corner of a musky cellar or even a muddy foxhole - it was his own, his "home". On the offensive, this security vanished; everyone was on a minute's call to move. The nervous tension of attack never had time to dissipate. As the convoys bored deeper into Germany, the tension increased. Every field, house, patch of woods, village or town was a potential strongpoint or hiding place for the enemy. And yet nothing happened - silence is sometimes worse than the din of battle. A calm nature was a tower of strength on the long marches to which there seemed no end. For the majority, the only conceivable goal was Berlin ... 110 miles to the east. It was this thought, though seldom expressed, that kept them moving.⁴⁰

Pushing his units as hard as he could, Simpson's advance elements raced through the Teutoburger Wald, crossed the Weser

River on the run, barely slowed to negotiate the Leine and Oker Rivers and closed on the Elbe at 2000 hours, 11 April 1945. The Ninth Army had traveled 226 miles in nineteen days.⁴¹ The great goal, however, remained Berlin:

With the army now rapidly closing up to the Elbe throughout its entire zone, the pressing question in the mind of the Army commander was of course the continuation of the advance to Berlin. On April 15, General Simpson conferred with General Bradley at 12th Army Group Tactical headquarters ... and presented his plan for the continued expansion of Ninth Army's Elbe bridgehead and a strong drive on to Berlin. By the direction of the Supreme Allied Commander, however, Ninth Army was ordered to hold its zone on the line of the Elbe and await the advance of the Russian forces ... General Simpson returned to his headquarters and issued the necessary orders for consolidation of the army's positions. The great advance was completed.⁴²

Although Ninth Army stood only fifty miles from Berlin and although the Russians had not yet reached that city, Eisenhower had what he felt were overriding reasons for not sending his forces on to Berlin. He considered the taking of Luebeck (with the subsequent liberation of Denmark) and the occupation of the Alpine Redoubt area to be vastly more important than sustaining a significant number of casualties assaulting and occupying a town which had already been placed by agreement in the Russian zone of occupation.⁴³

Germany's surrender found Ninth Army already establishing occupation rule in northern Germany. Following a brief tour of military government duties, Ninth Army and General Simpson redeployed to the United States on 15 June 1945.⁴⁴

Analysis of General Simpson's Personal Leadership

A study of the senior leadership exhibited by General Simpson as Ninth Army Commander must begin with an analysis of his demonstrated personal leadership attributes by examining his personality and character as they were applied to influencing his subordinates to accomplish their tasks.

His overall demeanor has been variously described as "tall, lean, egghead, restrained and modest"⁴⁵ and "quiet but strongwilled ... a born soldier and leader of men ... [with] a wonderful, earthy sense of humor."⁴⁶ Eisenhower described him as being a "clear thinker, energetic, balanced" and rated him highly.⁴⁷ Bradley wrote that he was "steady, prepossessing, well organized, earthy, a great infantryman and leader of men."⁴⁸ An official army historian has written that he:

... was an infantryman with a fatherly devotion to his troops after the manner of Bradley ... Even without insignia of rank, Bill Simpson looked the part of a general. His rangy, six-foot-four frame would have commanded attention even had he not kept his head clean-shaven. Having had wide combat experience ... General Simpson had a healthy respect for the assistance machines and big guns could give his riflemen.⁴⁹

He had other qualities, however, which were well demonstrated during his combat service with the Ninth Army and which serve to complete the picture of his personal leadership. One of these qualities was his easygoing disposition. During the COBRA bombings, Bradley's aide, Major Chet Hansen recorded this diary entry after some errant bombs sent them both diving for cover under the same truck:

We dove to the ground. I looked up and found myself face to face with General Simpson, who looked

at me with a grin on his face. One of the most friendly and companionable men in the Army, easy-going and soft spoken, never excited nor angry and horribly considerate of everyone.⁵⁰

Earlier, Hansen had recorded similar impressions of Simpson's good nature after a visit by the Ninth Army commander to Bradley's CP by writing of him as "genial, amiable and pleasant to the with."⁵¹ He was, apparently, genuinely well thought of and respected by all ranks and has been characterized as more admired and less feared by his staff than any other Army commander and who rarely, if ever, lost his temper.⁵² This easygoing style is attributed to a "unique blend of strength and humanity".⁵³

Another demonstrated personal leadership characteristic was his loyalty to his superiors. General Simpson demonstrated this trait early in the European campaign during his first meeting with General Bradley. Although six years Bradley's senior in Army service, Simpson assured him that the difference in date of rank would pose no problem to their working relationship and promised his complete loyalty.⁵⁴ He never gave Bradley cause to doubt that promise. During the intense action of the assaults on the fortified port city of Brest, when VIII Corps was lacking much in the way of supplies, he decided that vociferous complaining to his superiors about the problem was not the way to solve it. Instead he decided "to do what he could on his own to improve the situation."⁵⁵ His superiors, themselves wrestling with a solution to alleviate the severe logistics constraints during the race across France, put Simpson's loyalty to the test again when the Ninth Army was stripped of much of its assets in order to form the famous Red Ball Express. Simpson:

Though surely disappointed that all decisions had gone against the maintenance of the combat integrity of Ninth Army ... in his memorandum stressed that the mission was "an emergency call and will be expedited. Division commanders will give this their personal attention."⁵⁶

Perhaps the final and ultimate test of Simpson's loyalty to his superiors occurred as his army was perched on the edge of the Elbe River, prepared to dash the remaining fifty miles to pluck the greatest prize of the war - Berlin. Bradley describes Simpson's eagerness and preparations:

Simpson's Ninth Army then mustered a total force of three corps of thirteen divisions, comprising 330,000 men ... Simpson was absolutely convinced that he could launch McLain's and Gillem's corps at Berlin on April 15, that McLain could reach the outskirts of the city by nightfall April 17, and Gillem by noon April 18, at the latest. And was he raring to go!⁵⁷

But this prize was not to go to Simpson. Bradley had to inform him of Eisenhower's decision to stand fast. In his great disappointment, Simpson could have been excused if he had railed at this decision to the correspondents who met him at his headquarters, but instead, although hiding extreme disappointment, he merely said, "These are my orders ... and I have no further comments to make."⁵⁸

This loyalty was not only directed at his superiors. He showed it also to his subordinates. Simpson showed this loyalty to Middleton, through his unflagging personal support to the VIII Corps Commander while the latter was deeply involved in the frustrating, unglamorous task of reducing the fortress at Brest.⁵⁹ During this same time period, Simpson further demonstrated his loyalty to his subordinates and his non-publicity seeking nature

by refusing to personally accept the surrender of some 20,000 German soldiers, an event that promised extensive news coverage:

Simpson could have taken [the Germans'] surrender personally, but he had chosen to miss the ceremony, for he felt that as representatives of the 83rd Division had made contact with the Germans and had handled the entire operation, Macon [83rd Division Commander] was entitled to the limelight. Such an action would not make the Army commander's name a household word, but it would help earn the loyalty of his subordinates. Thus, Simpson attended to Brest, while the newsreel cameras whirred at the Beaugency Bridge.⁶⁰

General Simpson could be loyal to his soldiers even when they were leaving his command. When the 83rd Infantry Division prepared to move to another army just prior to the approach of winter, Simpson "directed the initiation of a massive supply effort designed to issue winter clothing to the unit."⁶¹ This kind of loyalty was appreciated by the men in the foxholes. His unselfish brand of loyalty was also recognized and appreciated by one of his corps commanders, Lieutenant General Alvan C. Gillem, who recorded:

A final comment is one designed to show the Army commander's unselfish and human side. It also illustrates his loyalty to a junior. Early in March, 1945, he informed one of his corps commanders that he had repeated his recommendation for promotion of the corps commander. This resulted shortly in the corps commander's promotion, although the Army commander himself never was so rewarded.⁶²

General Gillem also commented on another attribute of General Simpson's personal leadership when he relates that Simpson was possessed of a high degree of moral courage, and attribute which he believes that no commander of American troops should lack.⁶³ This moral courage was demonstrated by Simpson in February, 1945, when he made the agonizing decision to postpone the assault

crossing of the Roer River, even though he knew that if the Roer did not overflow its banks after he had called the assault off his career would undoubtedly be finished.⁶⁴ Later, he took a similar, although lesser, risk during the crossings of the Rhine, when he took it upon himself to forbid his assault troops carrying gas masks because he felt the masks would only increase drownings.⁶⁵

Simpson's unselfishness was shown continually throughout the European campaigns but no incident demonstrates it more clearly than one which occurred during the opening hours of the great German Ardennes Offensive. Eisenhower and Bradley, realizing the seriousness of the German attack, decided that the Ninth Army's 7th Armored Division and Patton's Third Army's 10th Armored Division would be needed at once in First Army's area. The reaction of each of the Army commanders demonstrates Simpson's unselfish attitude:

The situation [informing Patton] required all of Bradley's tact and determination. Eventually, after hearing out Patton's arguments, he laid down the law: the 10th Armored Division was ordered to move to the north. Then Bradley instructed his staff ... to send orders to the Ninth Army for the 7th Armored Division to head immediately south from Holland. Unlike the headstrong commander of the U.S. Third Army, it was unnecessary to make personal explanations to the steady General Simpson.⁶⁶

During this critical time, when commanders like Simpson realized that a team effort was required to turn back the German assault, formal orders to transfer units into the fight were often not even necessary:

In many cases, the transfer of units would be accomplished in simple fashion by telephone calls and simultaneous agreement between the higher commanders concerned. Hodges and Simpson had been comrades in World War I, and when Hodges asked for assistance, Simpson acted promptly and generously. On the 16th,

for example, Simpson offered the 30th Infantry Division and the 5th Armored on his own initiative.⁶⁷

XIX Corps Commander, General McLain, confirms this account and writes that he had his 30th Infantry Division on the road to Spa in short order.⁶⁸ Simpson's unselfishness and cooperation repeated themselves to good effect during the final drive to the Rhine when General Collins, VII Corps Commander in First Army, made a highly unorthodox direct call to General Simpson asking for assistance in closing the trap on the Ruhr pocket by suggesting that Simpson send the 2nd Armored Division to Lippstadt to meet his 3rd Armored Division. Simpson immediately agreed and the operation proceeded flawlessly.⁶⁹

Simpson's personal leadership characteristics of cooperation and teamwork served him well in his many dealings with the British. Indeed, it was partly for these characteristics that Bradley decided to place the Ninth Army on the north of his line, thereby being the unit to come under British command when Eisenhower decided on a change.⁷⁰ Although, upon learning of the boundary change, Simpson in characteristic good nature jokingly asked Bradley if the decision could be reversed,⁷¹ Bradley reported that Simpson congenially "served his indenture without incident or crisis."⁷² Simpson had already demonstrated a high spirit of cooperation and fairness in Allied activities during the November offensive when he had decided that the U.S. 84th Division must temporarily be attached to the British XXX Corps, even though this action could prick the pride of the U.S. Corps Commander. In doing so, he even managed to win over the full support of the U.S. Corps Commander involved.⁷³ The supreme test to his spirit of Allied cooperation and teamwork, however, came

when Field Marshal Montgomery limited Ninth Army's participation in the Rhine crossings. Presented with an opportunity to "jump" the Rhine on the run after McLain's XIX Corps burst through to the river on 4 March 1945, Simpson was certainly tempted to try. However, "he knew that Eisenhower would want him to go through channels, so he again went to Montgomery and asked permission to make an impromptu crossing of the river." It was, of course, denied.⁷⁴

Eisenhower appreciated Simpson's efforts and wrote to him personally on 26 March 1945 to say that he was "particularly gratified to note that your relationships with our British friends ... have been based on mutual respect and friendly cooperation."⁷⁵

Perhaps the best summation of General Simpson's personal leadership attributes was made by the Commander of his XIII Corps, General Gillem, and serves very well to tie together a snapshot of Simpson's personal leadership:

We see leadership best reflected, for example, when firmness is substituted for harshness, understanding for intolerance, humanness for bigotry, and when pride replaces egotism. General Simpson's every action exemplified the best of these traits of character. His integrity inspired a high degree of loyalty. His conduct on all occasions was scrupulous, and his associates of all ranks found him to be patient, impartial, courageous, sympathetic and confident. They also found him equally loyal to seniors and juniors alike. He was an able, respected commander for whom all were willing to give their best endeavors.⁷⁶

Analysis of General Simpson's Technical Competence

The next step in the application of the conceptual framework to the demonstrated senior leadership of General Simpson is the analysis of his technical competence - his ability to successfully perform those tasks necessary to effectively complete a mission by demonstrating mastery of those skills peculiar to his profession.

Upon his assumption of command of the Ninth Army, General Simpson already enjoyed an Army-wide reputation as an "extremely competent"⁷⁷ soldier and trainer, a reputation probably begun in his Army War College instructor days and undoubtedly enhanced by his early war divisional, corps and Army training commands as well as his command of the Infantry Replacement Center. This reputation of professional ability was well deserved and his "quiet competence ... became progressively more evident, as did the disciplined and orderly operation of the Ninth Army."⁷⁸

Certainly his technical credentials were exactly what should have been expected of an officer brought up through the Army system of staff, command and schools and "he had touched all the bases in his military career, had had progressively more responsible command and staff assignments, had attended each level of Army schooling, and throughout had maintained an outstanding level of performance."⁷⁹ His technical knowledge of the tactics and weapons of the day was well known and acknowledged throughout his subordinate corps, and one corps commander wrote that, "The Army commander's detailed knowledge of tactics and weapons permitted plans prepared by the corps to be quickly and comprehensively evaluated and recommendations approved in a minimum of time."⁸⁰ Simpson put his technical knowledge to good use in responding to Montgomery's Rhine crossing plan which, if followed, would effectively eliminate Ninth Army participation. In preparing his rebuttal, Simpson chose to down-play the obvious affront to American pride and concentrate on the technical problems this lack of American participation would foster, such as the supply and evacuation difficulties, the accumulation of assault and bridging

equipment and the wasting of the firepower and mass of twelve full divisions.⁸¹ Simpson's arguments prevailed.

General Simpson took his profession seriously enough to supplement his study of the more technical aspects of the military with extensive readings in military history. Prior to his deployment to the Continent, he enriched his professional background and appreciation of successful historical commanders by reading Wavell's Allenby and D.S. Freeman's Lee's Lieutenants.⁸² Apparently, his self-study in military history was comprehensive enough to allow him to brief a group of officers on Napoleon's exploits during a visit to the tomb of that famous Great Captain in September of 1944.⁸³

Simpson's continuing study of military history was not the only facet of technical skills at which he continued to learn. Prior to his Army's commitment to combat, Simpson resolved to learn all that he could about combat operations from those units already in action.⁸⁴ He made several visits to France to observe operations at the Corps and Army level and spent as much time as possible at command posts or discussing operations and procedures with the commanders.⁸⁵ After such visits, he would reflect on and evaluate what he had learned:

Having heard about COBRA from both the Army and breakthrough corps commanders, it now was time for Simpson to think about what he had learned. Some day he might have to plan and execute a major attack; he must be ready when that day came. A period of reflection was in order ...⁸⁶

Simpson knew and appreciated the value of expert advice when preparing his plans. He was not omniscient in every detailed aspect of operation of a the various branches which were represented in his army. The two major river crossing operations his army planned

and participated in, for example, required that he seek and heed the expert advice of his staff engineers. Simply deciding on a date for the Roer River assault required all the expertise and knowledge that this Ninth Army engineer could muster and provide his commander. After sifting through the reams of data on flow rates, and the engineer's best guess, the decision was made.⁸⁷ The successful crossing was not just the result of paperwork and guesswork, however. A river training school was set up under Army control on the Maas River where all units used in the river assault crossings received expert and extensive training at this so-called "River Rats Finishing School".⁸⁸

General Simpson demonstrated that his technical competence also included a keen appreciation of the opportunities for a mobile war of exploitation presented by the tactical situation in the last few months of the European campaigns. His planning for the Roer River crossing and assault to the Rhine included the provision that should enemy resistance collapse "phases were to be ignored and each corps ... [should] be prepared to conduct relentless pursuit in zone."⁸⁹ When such an eventuality did, in fact, occur, Simpson wasted no time in ordering McLain's XIX Corps to abandon the phased portion of the plan and strike swiftly to the Rhine, brushing aside the feeble German resistance.⁹⁰ The Twelfth Army Group Commander later described this assault as "one of the most perfectly executed of the war."⁹¹ Simpson's grasp of the potential of this type of mobile war was demonstrated also during the final exploitation to the Elbe. The Ninth Army history describes the situation:

The final phase of the European campaign offered an

opportunity to the Army to capitalize to the utmost on the mobility and firepower characteristic of armored forces. The terrain and weather were ideal. The first assault across the Rhine and the subsequent drive eastward had rolled up the German defenses and had forestalled the disintegration which would open the way for the armor to break out and pour forward across the front.⁹²

Nineteen days and 226 miles later, this brilliant exploitation arrived at the Elbe. The only criticism of Simpson's appreciation of mobile warfare possibilities during this time, comes from Bradley who described Simpson's belief that he could have easily continued his exploitation to Berlin as unrealistic when long supply lines, thin logistic support and estimated casualty figures were considered.⁹³

That Simpson possessed the necessary technical competence to carry out his mission as combat commander of the Ninth Army, therefore, was amply demonstrated, earning him the accolade of "a real general's general" from a division commander who had served in several armies under various generals.⁹⁴ The best summary of his total development is provided in this assessment by his biographer:

As [Simpson] progressed through even more responsible positions, he attended the various schools that made up the Army professional education system. He completed the Infantry School Advanced Course in 1924, the Command and General Staff School in 1925, and the Army War College in 1928. Simpson can truly be called a product of the Army system of graduated schools and assignments geared to prepare an officer for high command.⁹⁵

Analysis of General Simpson's Organizational Leadership

Organizational leadership is the ability of the leader to influence the total performance of the group by organizing and directing the group's efforts toward a common goal; the establishment and maintenance of a structure for focusing the efforts of the group for the common good. One true test of General Simpson's senior

leadership is how effectively he demonstrated these abilities as Commander of the Ninth Army.

General Simpson initiated the difficult process of structuring an effective organization through which to focus and direct the efforts of the Ninth Army by establishing the tone and tenor of the Army hierarchy early in the unit's history:

Controlling an organization as diversified as a field army is difficult at any time, but under combat conditions the challenge is especially great. At Ninth Army headquarters, General Simpson set the tone, and under the close supervision of his Chief of Staff, Brigadier General James E. Moore, headquarters functions were conducted according to well established Army principles. Many on the staff at Army level and in subordinate units had attended the Command and General Staff School, and it was ensured that the lessons learned at Leavenworth were followed in practice.⁹⁶

The key to influencing and directing the performance of this organization was obviously the relationship between the Army Commander and the Chief of Staff. Simpson and Moore had worked together in several units in the past and had a comfortable and effective working relationship:

... they understood, trusted and admired each other. Moore usually could anticipate Simpson's reactions while Simpson gave Moore a great deal of latitude. Often while Simpson was in the field, Moore would issue orders in the Commander's name, then tell Simpson later. So closely did the two work together that in many instances it is impossible to sort out actions taken or ideas conceived. Moore was an intelligent, thorough, dedicated and loyal staff officer; he well complemented Simpson ... Simpson was careful to enhance Moore's position by using the staff through the Chief ... he either passed his guidance and questions through the Chief or had Moore sit in on his discussions with the staff officers.⁹⁸

Simpson and Moore built their team well, the senior staff officers being nominated from the service at large but personally approved by General Simpson. With very few changes these officers

served in their original Ninth Army positions throughout the European campaign.⁹⁹ Mostly infantrymen, the men who made up Ninth Army's organizational structure began focusing their group effort toward the goal of preparing the Army for combat operations in the fall of 1943 while still part of the Fourth Army's expanded staff.¹⁰⁰ The agreed upon staff procedures of the general staff sections were basically those as taught in the Army's service schools. Unlike those of the First and Third Armies, the special staff sections did not function under any general staff section but, of course, had to coordinate with the appropriate general staff section. Furthermore, unlike the First and Third Armies, the Ninth Army Deputy Chief of Staff did not directly supervise any of the special staff sections and their chiefs reported directly to the Chief of Staff.¹⁰¹ A review of Ninth Army's Administrative Instructions confirms the normalcy of the Army's organizational arrangements as it shows a standard G1-G4 administrative standing operating procedures containing nothing unexpected or out of the ordinary.¹⁰²

After organizing the staff, Simpson and Moore proceeded to train it to function in the manner designed to produce the best results in combat. They rejected any trick ideas or those that promised to be only temporarily effective preferring sound, proven procedures which could give a positive answer to the question, "Would it work effectively in combat?"¹⁰³ The training of the Ninth Army staff became an early top priority task:

Often senior commanders are so caught up in the day-to-day business of running a large organization that they tend to neglect the training of their own staffs. Such was not the case in Ninth Army. Certainly the immediacy of the need for such training helped to elevate its priority, but it

addition both commander and chief of staff had made it a practice to monitor closely the training of the army staff.¹⁰⁴

During stateside preparations for overseas deployment, the Army staff participated in a highly beneficial map exercise lasting more than a month and allowing a number of problems in staff functioning to be identified and addressed.¹⁰⁵ Such intensive training could not, however, identify or cover all the practical aspects of each staff section's broad scope of responsibility and, upon arriving in England, a number of other problems began to be identified and dealt with. For example, the army staff was generally unprepared to deal with the practical aspects of casualty reporting. The solution to this was to study closely the manner in which other headquarters had approached the problem, to include studying their directives and procedures and sending staff officers on temporary duty with deployed armies to obtain practical experience.¹⁰⁶

Another valuable technique for preparing the Ninth Army staff for combat operations was the practice of sending observers to France to gain first-hand experience in the way the deployed armies' headquarters were dealing with battlefield procedures. These observers, upon returning to Ninth Army headquarters in England, would conduct night schools for all staff members to be instructed on these successful procedures.¹⁰⁷ Although First Army would allow only General Simpson or his Chief of Staff to make personal visits, the Third Army was more accomodating and all Ninth Army staff personnel were welcome there.¹⁰⁸ Valuable experience was learned from these informal staff visits. The training did not end when the Ninth Army began combat operations in September, 1944. The

staff continued to reappraise and adjust working methods during the operations in Brittany¹⁰⁹ and any break in the action was seized upon by General Simpson or General Moore to refocus the organization on the ultimate goal by refining and aligning procedures.¹¹⁰

Such realignment was often made more difficult by the assignment of multiple missions by Army group headquarters. During the operations in Brittany, for example, the Ninth Army was simultaneously conducting a major siege operation, screening the 300 mile southern flank of Twelfth Army Group, receiving and training all units arriving in western France and closing out operations of its rear elements in England.¹¹¹ At least the Army area was somewhat static during that time. In later operations, the problem of maintaining the focus of the organization on a common goal would be exacerbated by the very speed of the advance:

As the Army advanced rapidly towards the Rhine, many new problems were encountered that affected every staff section. The long period of slow advance was over, the entire tempo of the headquarters was accelerated to keep pace with the fluid movement of the combat troops. After the crossing of the Rhine, this was even more apparent when advances of thirty miles were not uncommon occurrences. All sections met this new challenge and bent with renewed energy to the task of finishing off the retreating and beaten enemy.¹¹²

Simpson's primary means of focusing the Army staff's efforts toward the common goal was his involvement in the development of the Army's plans. He considered planning to be a major staff function and ensured "that regular military staff planning procedures be scrupulously followed."¹¹³ After receiving a mission from the Army group commander, Simpson would present his general planning guidance to the staff after which, each section would prepare and present a formal estimate of the situation.¹¹⁴ Once these

estimates were consolidated and evaluated, formal planning directives would be issued to each subordinate corps commander. An example is Ninth Army Letter of Instruction Number 10, 28 January 1945, which provided planning guidance for the Rhineland operations:

Ninth US Army will relieve elements of Second British Army along the Roer River southeast of Roermond as soon as forces are available. Subsequently, Ninth US Army will attack northeast from the Juelich-Linnich base to destroy the enemy in zone and to seize the west bank of the Rhine between Neuss (inclusive) and Moers (exclusive).¹¹⁵

Simpson was continually looking well ahead and deep in the enemy's zone, not letting his staff become near-sighted by allowing them to focus only on the immediate objectives. During the GRENADE planning, the drive across the Roer to the Rhine, he devised a plan to establish a bridgehead across the Rhine, continuing on with a drive around the northeastern corner of the Ruhr industrial area. This plan promised great success but unfortunately was disapproved by Field Marshal Montgomery, as his plans were based on a more restrained, "set piece" crossing.¹¹⁶ Such planning was not altogether wasted, however, because it served to generate staff thinking along the lines of the magnitude of the problem, the numbers of troops and special equipment needed but, above all, started the staff thinking about the soon to come exploitation from the Rhine to the Elbe.¹¹⁷ This advance planning and constant preparation for the next mission continued to the very end of Ninth Army's operations in Europe. Early April of 1945 found the staff feverishly planning the never-to-be-used assault on Berlin¹¹⁸ and by the end of the month, prior to the cessation of hostilities, the Army headquarters had already developed a plan for governing the occupied territories.¹¹⁹

General Bradley outlined the heart of this efficient and

effective organization when he noted:

[Ike and I] were immensely impressed with Simpson and his staff and the planning they had done. Simpson's Chief of Staff, James E. Moore, was one of the least known yet ablest officers in the ETO ... Moore "minded the store" while Simpson toured his corps and division headquarters. Owing to Moore's intelligence and talent for administration, Ninth Army's staff, although least experienced in battle, was in some respects superior to any in my command. Moreover, both Simpson and Moore get along remarkably well with Monty and the British staffs ... As Ike put it in his memoirs: "If Simpson ever made a mistake as an Army commander, it never came to my attention."¹²⁰

These successful operations conducted by Ninth Army, therefore, are directly attributable to the ability of General Simpson to form, train and direct an impressive team toward their common, well defined goal.

Analysis of General Simpson's Management

The final element of the senior leadership model through which to analyze General Simpson's demonstrated leadership is to investigate his management abilities. These are the techniques, skills and abilities he used to provide implementation and direction for the organization and include analyzing, problem solving, decision making, coordinating, supervising and evaluating. Management differs from organizational leadership in that the latter provides broad focusing and team building while the former includes the specific actions and techniques employed to accomplish a task.

It can be surmised after the previous discussion which highlighted Simpson's emphasis on doctrinally accepted staff procedures and techniques when organizing and training his staff, that his management techniques emphasized standard staff procedure. It should not come as a surprise that "staff conferences were held

virtually every morning; at these, Simpson and his key officers were updated on the military situation following which the commander gave appropriate guidance."¹²¹ His insistence on proper and detailed staff procedures facilitated not only the management of the operation but its ultimate success also. These procedures "paid great dividends" and his operations were "well known for their perfect timing."¹²²

An important ingredient to the success of Simpson's operations was his early explanation of his intent and concept in order that the staff could have the maximum time available to develop a workable plan for "True to American preference, he told his subordinates what he wanted accomplished, then left it up to them to devise a way to attain the objective."¹²³ More important and significant to his control and management of the entire operation than these mission-type orders, however, was his "education of the Army and subordinate staffs in the overall battle planning which insured a unity of their efforts."¹²⁴

Simpson insisted on following proper procedures and these preparations for the GRENADE operation exemplify these procedures:

As they did for every major action of the Army, the Army Commander and his staff followed certain definite and clearly formulated procedures in their own planning, in acquainting the several corps with the plans, and in coordinating the planning and actions of the corps. A complete formal estimate of the situation was prepared by the Army staff. After approval by the Army Commander, the final detailed plan was prepared and a planning directive was issued to the several corps. Each corps was required to present to the Army Commander its formal estimate of the situation and its plans based thereon. Final presentation was made in the presence of all corps commanders and key Army and corps staff officers. Thus each corps knew exactly what the others were to do, and why.¹²⁵

These procedures not only required close cooperation and coordination between Army and corps staffs, but necessitated constant

cooperation and coordination between the several staff sections of the Army staff. The Ninth Army engineer's after action report of the Rhine crossing highlights some of the staff coordination necessary for that major effort of staff cooperation but it can only hint at the painstaking and detailed preparation that must have preceded such an undertaking.¹²⁶ This attention to the myriad of details necessary to control an operation at Army level did not appear, however, to hamstring the Army commander when unforeseen circumstances necessitated a change in plans:

Should an occasion arise which had not been foreseen in the planning sessions, Simpson was prepared to modify his plans or influence the action by using the resources he could summon. Corps commanders appreciated this flexibility and also Simpson's cool, calm manner of operation. When Simpson felt that things were not going as he wanted, he did not bypass a corps commander to give orders to a division or regimental commander but worked through the senior commander.¹²⁷

General Simpson apparently set great store by the wargaming technique, as he appears to have used this extensively as a means of bringing out all issues and possible courses of action associated with an operation.¹²⁸ Frequently, each upcoming operation was wargamed several times and the Roer River crossing was wargamed on 3 February, 7 February and again on 8 February¹²⁹ before the operation was postponed due to German sabotage of the dams. This procedure was repeated later in the month just prior to the actual assault. As Ninth Army employed this procedure, each staff officer or commander put himself in the shoes of his opposing German counterpart, and attempted to devise the best strategy for countering every conceivable American action.¹³⁰

Simpson and his Army staff were not so inflexible in their

adherence to established procedures that they could not improvise when necessary. Early in Ninth Army's combat service, the situation in Brittany caused Simpson to adopt the rather unorthodox procedure of placing the 83rd Infantry Division and 6th Armored Division directly under Ninth Army command.¹³¹ There was good reason for this move, however, since the only corps headquarters available, General Middleton's VIII Corps, was deeply involved in assaulting the fortified port city, Brest:

General Middleton, with three divisions and supporting troops, was fighting the battle of Brest, his chief mission, and concurrently he had command of two other divisions and the responsibility of protecting some 310 miles along the southern flank ... This [transfer] permitted VIII Corps to devote its entire energies to completing quickly the battle for Brest.¹³²

The Ninth Army staff could innovate also as it did in the late fall of 1944 when, faced with a severe shortage of logistics storage space due to a narrow sector and a rapid troop build-up, the staff devised the solution of storing supplies on the wide, paved road shoulders thereby assuring hard road access to these supplies also.¹³³ Another innovation forced upon the Army by the exigencies of supply was a strict rationing program for artillery ammunition in November, 1944, which succeeded in establishing a small but basically adequate reserve to support the coming offensive.¹³⁴

Appreciating the value of morale, General Simpson and his staff initiated several morale building programs in order to keep the efficiency of line and staff soldiers at the highest level possible. These programs included rest and recuperation centers, rotation to the United States, passes to Paris and the United Kingdom

and liberalized battle field promotion standards.¹³⁵ These programs, coupled with an all out attack by the commanding officer against the soldiers' worst enemy at that time - trenchfoot - went a long way toward raising morale and efficiency.¹³⁶

General Simpson's personal techniques for managing the operations of the Ninth Army included numerous personal visits to subordinate units and their headquarters. He felt these visits not only kept him abreast of how the fight was progressing but "they might also buoy up the spirits of his men."¹³⁷ He spent much time during an operation away from his command post, allowing his Chief of Staff to coordinate the activities necessary to keep the operation in motion. Simpson asked careful questions during these visits and never failed to check up on situations or incidents he encountered.¹³⁸ His wartime G-3 summed up his ability for checking out the full story before acting:

General Simpson's genius lay in his characteristic manner, his command presence, his ability to listen, his unflinching use of his staff to check things out before making decisions, and his way of making all hands feel that they were important to him and to the Army ... I have never known a commander to make better use of his staff than General Simpson.¹³⁹

To assist in keeping up to date on current and future operations, General Simpson made it a habit to eat his evening meals with the senior staff members and occasionally unit commanders. After these informal dinners another officer would brief the entire group on the current situation Army-wide. Later, the Army commander would phone each of the corps commanders for a personal report. Afterwards, Simpson would discuss the subjects of these calls with the appropriate staff sections.¹⁴⁰

Although each of these techniques worked well for him, the lynchpin of his success as a manager appears to be his caring, concerned and considerate manner:

This sincere, caring demeanor was a key to Simpson's ability to maintain rapport and elicit maximum efforts from his subordinates. Should a staff officer stumble during a briefing, Simpson attempted without cussing or raising his voice, to draw him out. When it became obvious that an officer could not handle the pressure and would have to go, Simpson was known to arrange for the man to be admitted to the hospital, then quietly shifted to a job he could handle. Such an approach was appreciated ... 141

Indeed, such an approach went a long way toward eliciting the maximum performance that Simpson's staff was obviously producing on a consistent basis. That staff was not organized or designed to fight the battle at the tactical level, that job being rightfully performed at corps or division level. Rather it must be managed in such a way that it produces consistently the resources and guidance that make success possible. The Army must establish the goals and set the tone for the conduct of the operation which, if done correctly, will produce the best results attainable in any given situation. The system which developed in the Ninth Army accomplished this:

That this system worked has been attested to by Ninth Army soldiers of various ranks. Major General Robert C. Macon whose 83rd Infantry Division served in several armies, recalled ... that he had had a problemless relationship with the Ninth Army staff ... a former sergeant recollected that once his division joined Ninth Army he received patrol instructions early enough to properly plan, an advantage he had not enjoyed in two other armies ... Brigadier General John H. (Pee Wee) Collier of the 2nd Armored Division, also remembered Ninth Army for its pre-eminently smooth operation. 142

That the system in the Ninth Army worked as it has been reported is a tribute to the demonstrated management abilities of General Simpson, his Chief of Staff and the Ninth Army staff officers who served them well throughout the European campaign.¹⁴³

NOTES

¹Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier's Story (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951), p. 422.

²Thomas R. Stone, "He Had the Guts to Say NO: A Military Biography of General William Hood Simpson" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Rice University, 1974), p. 3.

³The Howitzer, 1909 edition, (West Point: The United States Military Academy, 1909), p. 77.

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⁵Ibid.

⁶Stone, "He Had the Guts to Say No", p. 3.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰T.M. Dunleavy, ed., "Lieutenant General William H. Simpson", Generals of the Army and the Air Force 2 (June, 1954): 19. Simpson received the Distinguished Service Medal for his service as Chief of Staff, 33rd Division and was awarded a Silver Star for his service during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. He also received the Legion of Honor and Croix de Guerre from France.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 20.

¹³Ibid.

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¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., et al., ed. The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The War Years, 5 Volumes (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 3:1975.

¹⁷ Russell F. Weigley, Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaigns of France and Germany 1944-1945 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. 431.

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¹⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

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²⁶ Ibid., p. 40.

²⁷ U.S., Department of the Army, Ninth United States Army After Action Report, December 1944, pp. 2-3.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Mick, op. cit., p. 110.

³⁰ Conquer, pp. 366-367.

³¹ Mick, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

³² U.S., Department of the Army, Ninth United States Army After Action Report, 1-15 February 1945, p. 3.

³³ Stephen E. Ambrose, Eisenhower: Volume I Soldier, General of the Army, President-Elect, 1890-1952 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 385.

³⁴ Weigley, op. cit., p. 615.

³⁵ Charles B. MacDonald, The United States Army in World War II. European Theater of Operations. The Last Offensive (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 296.

³⁶ Conquer, p. 245.

³⁷ Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, A General's Life: An Autobiography by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 422. Simpson's personal opinion of Montgomery is open to speculation; however, he has been described as "appalled" at Montgomery's initial decision regarding Ninth Army's limited participation in the Rhine crossings and had queried Bradley as to when his unit would return to U.S. command. Although Simpson was too good a soldier to say so bluntly, he was probably relieved to get back to U.S. command on 3 April 1945.

³⁸ U.S., Department of the Army, Ninth United States Army After Action Report, April 1945, p. 1.

³⁹ Bradley and Blair, op. cit., pp. 422-423.

⁴⁰ Mick, op. cit., p. 205.

⁴¹ Bradley and Blair, op. cit., p. 424.

⁴² Conquer, p. 304.

⁴³ Ambrose, op. cit., p. 397.

⁴⁴ U.S. Department of the Army, Ninth United States Army After Action Report, May, 1945, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Weigley, op. cit., p. 284.

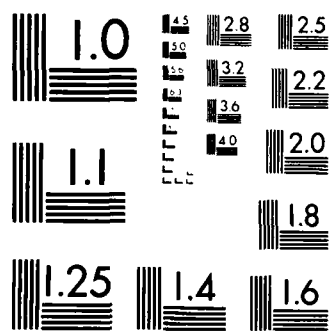
⁴⁶ Bradley and Blair, op. cit., p. 340-341.

⁴⁷ Chandler, et al., op. cit., 4:2466-2467.

⁴⁸ Bradley and Blair, op. cit., p. 219.

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⁵⁰ Stone, "He Had the Guts to Say No", p. 24.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
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- ⁵³Thomas R. Stone, "General William Hood Simpson: Unsung Commander of US Ninth Army", Parameters 11 (February 1980): 50-51.
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- ⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 60-61.
- ⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 74-76.
- ⁵⁷Bradley and Blair, op. cit., p. 427.
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- ⁶⁸Raymond S. McLain, "One of the Greatest: A Study in Leadership", Military Review 44 (December 1969): 26.

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- ⁷⁰Bradley and Blair, op. cit., p. 340.
- ⁷¹Bradley, op. cit., p. 492.
- ⁷²Ibid., p.528.
- ⁷³Gillem, op. cit., pp. 24-25.
- ⁷⁴Toland, op. cit., pp. 352-355.
- ⁷⁵Chandler, et al., op. cit., 4:2545.
- ⁷⁶Gillem, op. cit., p. 23.
- ⁷⁷Toland, op. cit., p. 54.
- ⁷⁸Stone, "General Simpson", pp. 49-50.
- ⁷⁹Stone, "He Had the Guts to Say No", p. 45.
- ⁸⁰Gillem, op. cit., p. 24.
- ⁸¹MacDonald, Last Offensive, pp. 295-296.
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- ⁸³Stone, "He Had the Guts to Say No", p. 101.
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- ⁸⁸U.S., Department of the Army, Ninth United States Army After Action Report, March 1945, p. 5.
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- ¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 140-141.
- ¹²⁶ U.S Department of the Army, Ninth United States Army Engineer Operations in Rhine River Crossings, 30 June 1945, p. 8.
- ¹²⁷ Stone, "General Simpson", p. 48.
- ¹²⁸ Stone, "He Had the Guts to Say No", p. 152.
- ¹²⁹ Stone, "1630 Comes Early on the Roer", pp. 12-13, 16; Conquer, p. 160.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

¹³¹ Martin Blumenson, The United States Army in World War II. European Theater of Operations. Breakout and Pursuit (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 637.

¹³² Conquer, pp. 38-39.

¹³³ MacDonald, Siegfried Line, p. 521.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ninth Army After Action Report, December 1944, p. 4.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Stone, "He Had the Guts to Say No", pp. 125-126.

¹³⁸ Stone, "General Simpson", p. 47.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁴³ General Simpson retired from active service for reasons of health shortly after the end of World War II and was promoted to four star rank on the retired list in 1954. He died in 1980 at the age of ninety-two.

CHAPTER 4

IN THE EYE OF THE HURRICANE - MAJOR GENERAL TROY HOUSTON MIDDLETON

Introduction

While the Battle of the Bulge roared around him like a raging hurricane in that dark December of 1944, Major General Troy Houston Middleton remained "cool as an icicle"¹ and calmly directed the efforts of his shattered VIII Corps to slow the German offensive during the most desperate struggle of American arms of the campaign of France and Germany, 1944-1945. The U.S. Army's youngest Regimental Commander during the First World War,² Middleton voluntarily left a comfortable retirement to return to active service and calmly but firmly lead first the 45th Division through Sicily and Italy, and then the VIII Corps from the hedgerows of Normandy through the snows of the Ardennes to the heartland of Germany. Known and respected throughout the pre-war army as a premier infantry tactician, his outward appearance reminded observers of a fatherly, bespectacled college professor; but he possessed a steely resolve and stubborn tenacity of purpose which allowed him to relieve overly-excitable or unsuccessful subordinates without hesitation.

General Eisenhower summed up Middleton's contributions as a corps commander in this recommendation for promotion to Lieutenant General:

General Middleton brought his corps into the battle on June 14 [1944] and took an important role in the

operations leading to the breakout near St. Lo. He then led his corps into the Brittany Peninsula and finally reduced the stronghold of Brest. Later, occupying a long defensive line, his corps withstood the initial shock of the German attack in the Ardennes battle and although widely dispersed he calmly retained control of his retreating forces and so conducted his operations as to impede and limit the extent of the German advance. In succeeding operations he has taken a prominent part in all the advances of the Third Army. General Middleton is particularly highly qualified as a tactician. He has great experience as a combat soldier both in this war and in 1918. He is noted for sound judgment and a shrewd sense of the capabilities of the troops under his command.³

Middleton needed all the tactical knowledge, sound judgment and shrewd sense of his troops' capabilities that he could muster to retain control of events during the Battle of the Bulge, but it was primarily the calm leadership he displayed while in the eye of this man-made hurricane that will stand as his greatest achievement.

Background and Early Career of General Middleton: 1889-1944

Descended from English settlers who arrived in North America in 1651, Troy Houston Middleton's American ancestors were plantation owners throughout the southern states, operating a series of plantations from Virginia to Mississippi.⁴ The middle child in a family of nine children, Middleton was born on 12 October 1889, on the family plantation near Georgetown in Copiah County, Mississippi.⁵ After a vigorous childhood in this rural, undeveloped section of the country during which Middleton spent much of his time outdoors riding or hunting, he finished his formal education at Mississippi A and M, graduating in the class of 1909.⁶ Missing out on an appointment to the United States Military Academy, Middleton instead enlisted as a private in the 29th Infantry Regiment in

March 1910.⁷

During his nearly three years as an enlisted man Middleton gained much valuable practical experience as well as a special insight into the common soldier's perceptions and attitudes. He successfully completed a commissioning exam while stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1912 and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of infantry in 1913 with date of rank effective 30 November 1912.⁸ Posted shortly thereafter to the Mexican border, Middleton saw service in Texas until the United States entered the First World War.⁹

Middleton accompanied the 4th Infantry Division to France in the spring of 1918 and was promoted to Major in June, assuming command of a battalion shortly thereafter. He entered combat with his battalion and was involved in intense combat operations at St. Mihiel and during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.¹⁰ Middleton's coolness under fire and obviously quick grasp of the elements necessary for success in this style of infantry combat led to his rapid promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in September and Colonel in October. He assumed command of the 39th Infantry on the battlefield on 11 October 1918, becoming the youngest Regimental Commander in the U.S. Army.¹¹ His regiment continued to score resounding successes until the Armistice halted its advances on 11 November. After a brief tour of occupation duty, Middleton returned to the United States in early 1919.

In the rapid demobilization at the conclusion of the war, Middleton reverted to a peacetime rank of Captain and assumed duties as an instructor at the Infantry School in Fort Benning, Georgia

in 1919.¹² After several years as an instructor during which he further enhanced his reputation as a tactician, Middleton was selected to attend the Command and General Staff School in 1923. Graduating as an Honor Graduate, he was selected to remain at Fort Leavenworth on the staff school faculty, serving from 1924 to 1928. Many of the men who would lead the U.S. Army to victory in World War II, including Eisenhower, were taught by Middleton during his tenure as an instructor.¹³ Following this tour as a teacher, Middleton became a student once more, attending the Army War College in 1928-1929.¹⁴ After brief service in the 29th Infantry Regiment at Fort Benning, Middleton was selected as Commandant of Cadets at Louisiana State University in 1930 where, for a number of personal and professional reasons, he remained for the next six years.¹⁵ Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel near the end of his stay at LSU, Middleton was sent to the Philippines as an Inspector General in 1936.¹⁶ It was during this service in the Philippines that Middleton wrestled with the decision to remain in the service, or to retire and accept a lucrative position with the university which had won his allegiance over the past six years. While trying to decide his future course, Middleton sought the advice of his former staff school student, Dwight Eisenhower:

About this time, Troy Middleton asked Eisenhower for some career advice ... "Ike", Middleton said, "I've been offered the job of comptroller at LSU. To take it, I'll have to resign from the Army. What do you think?"

"Don't do it, Troy." Eisenhower replied. "Don't do it." He explained that "there is going to be a war, and we are going to be in it, and you are sure to be a division commander at least. It's your great opportunity, and if you quit us now, you'll miss it." Middleton nevertheless resigned his commission and took the position at LSU.¹⁷

Despite Eisenhower's advice to the contrary, Middleton accepted the position at LSU, resigning his commission in 1937. Apparently, Ike was less than pleased with Middleton's decision and held it against him thereafter. In the closing days of World War II "General Marshall wanted to make [Middleton] a permanent two-star general in the Regular Army. Marshall asked Eisenhower's opinion; Eisenhower would not agree. 'He left us when the going was tough', Eisenhower growled."¹⁸

As the war clouds gathered, Middleton applied himself to straightening out the troubled finances of the university and enjoying the comfortable academic life, but when the war engulfed the U.S. he wrote Marshall volunteering for active duty. Marshall quickly accepted his offer, promoted him to Brigadier General, and assigned him as assistant division commander of the 45th Infantry Division at Fort Devons, Massachusetts in 1942. Later that year Middleton was appointed division commander and prepared to lead the 45th into its first combat in the invasion of Sicily.¹⁹ General Omar Bradley recalls his assessment of Middleton and his division prior to its first combat:

I did not know Troy Middleton except by reputation, which was very, very good. He had entered the Army in World War I and had twice been promoted on the same battlefield in France to become the youngest regimental commander in the U.S. Army. Later, he had been a classmate of Patton's at the Command and General Staff School in Ft. Leavenworth. He retired from the Army in 1937 and subsequently became Dean of Administration at Louisiana State University. After being recalled to active service in 1942, he was named commanding general of the 45th Division, a National Guard outfit from Oklahoma - Texas, which was, in the words of the official Army historian, "probably one of the best trained divisions in the American Army." The 45th was entirely green to combat and, in fact, was still back in the U.S. ... I had

considerable misgivings about introducing the 45th to combat over an enemy beach in the first major amphibious landing of World War II, but if it had to be done that way, there was probably no better group of guinea pigs.²⁰

Middleton and the 45th validated Bradley's confidence and allayed his misgivings by performing well throughout the Sicily campaign. Middleton led his division into Italy and continued his outstanding performance until November 1943 when he "had to give up the 45th division and go into a hospital at Naples and then to Walter Reed Hospital with a painful knee, diagnosed by various physicians as caused by arthritis or injury."²¹ Condition was so serious that it nearly led to Middleton's permanent stateside assignment, but his combat reputation was so outstanding that Ike asked for him for corps command during the invasion preparations.²² Middleton was therefore selected to command the VIII Corps, scheduled to arrive in France after the assault divisions and to expand the lodgement area in Normandy:

Because of Bradley's principle that units are never better than their commanders, the First Army Chief and the Supreme Commander looked with particular interest to General Middleton's debut at the head of the corps; British attitudes also made the Americans peculiarly sensitive to the lack of experience in their higher leadership. Eisenhower himself was insisting to the War Department that proven combat performance must be a major criterion for senior command and that divisions and corps should go only to those commanders of regiments and combat commands who excelled under fire. Though new to a corps, Middleton had the next best credentials ... Middleton had taken over the 45th Division in training and added to his combat laurels [from WWI] through his command of it in Sicily and Italy.²³

As D-Day approached, Middleton prepared his corps to enter combat and back into battle he "would go, despite the gimpy knee."²⁴

General Middleton and the VIII Corps: 1944-1945

The VIII Corps' initiation to combat at D plus 8 was a bloody, frustrating slugfest through the hedgerows of Normandy's Cotentin Peninsula. The marshy, unyielding terrain more than the determined German defenders kept Middleton's progress to a crawl and advances were measured in hundreds of yards:

... progress in the U.S. zone ... had been costly and slow. Major General Troy Middleton's U.S. VIII Corps, attacking from the Cotentin Peninsula southward, had encountered dismal failure, due not so much to enemy action as to the marshy country through which the attacks had to be conducted. By early July General Bradley had abandoned the attack on the extreme west as a bad job.²⁵

This inauspicious beginning was soon followed by outstanding success, however, when Bradley's COBRA operation finally blasted a hole in the German defenses, allowing Collins' VII Corps to break through. Free at last from the restrictive confines of the beach-head area, Middleton's VIII Corps swept forward rapidly as the right flank unit of the U.S. front. Throughout the remainder of July and into August, Middleton's attack gained momentum. Led by the 4th and 6th Armored Divisions, VIII Corps units were advancing farther and faster than anyone had thought possible. Once the shell of German resistance facing the American First Army had been pierced at St. Lo, the slashing American columns proceeded to keep the enemy off balance, rounding up prisoners at an unprecedented rate:

The haul of about 8,300 prisoners on the last two days of July was the largest yet taken in a comparable time by any corps of the Allied Armies. In the bag was represented every major German unit that had been in front of the VIII Corps when COBRA began.

The prisoners came streaming in even though Middleton told his commanders that taking prisoners must not delay the advance: "Send them to the rear disarmed without

guards." For the 4th and 6th Armored Divisions were setting new allied records in rapidity of advance as well as prisoner hauls ... CCB [4th Armored Division] covered sixty-eight kilometers ... in three days ... CCA ... traveled eighty-seven kilometers in four days. No other Anglo-American units had yet done so well.²⁶

At the beginning of August and in compliance with OVERLORD plans to logistically expand the Normandy lodgment area, VIII Corps units turned westward into the Brittany Peninsula and headed for the port cities of Lorient and Brest. This decision to route an entire corps, 50,000 troops, away from the battle against the principle German forces to the east has been surrounded with controversy and second-guessing.²⁷ Historian Martin Blumenson has attempted to explain the primary considerations of the planners when making the decision to divert major resources to securing the Brittany Peninsula:

... the sudden breakout at the end of July had disrupted an orderly development of a Continental supply system. U.S. troops had burst out of a cramped beachhead, and supply distances were no longer counted in tens of miles but in hundreds. [OVERLORD was] ... designed to secure for the Allies a continental lodgment - that area of northwest France bounded generally by the Seine and Loire Rivers - from which to mount an assault against Germany. In order to mount that assault, the Allies had reckoned they would first need to transform the lodgment into a base, which was to support the drive to the enemy homeland. In concept, therefore, OVERLORD was fundamentally logistical. The presence of Allied combat troops at the Seine, though signifying the tactical completion of OVERLORD, would not necessarily satisfy the logistical requirements.²⁸

Spearheaded by the two armored divisions, VIII Corps drove rapidly into the Brittany Peninsula and soon the 4th Armored Division arrived at Lorient and the 6th Armored Division pulled up in front of the formidable fortress of the port of Brest. By this time assigned to Patton's Third Army, the VIII Corps soon lost its

premier armored division, Wood's 4th, to the drive across France and Middleton moved his infantry divisions up to begin the assault on the Brest fortress. The 2nd, 8th and 29th Infantry Divisions moved westward to Brest and prepared to launch their attack on that city on 25 August.²⁹ Securing this port would prove to be no simple task:

The American charged with taking Brest, Major General Troy H. Middleton, Commander of VIII Corps had no easy problem, the Germans comprised but one facet of his difficulties. The main Allied forces driving eastward to the Seine and beyond left him with the responsibility for a growing rear area between his forces in Brittany and those going east. Eventually Middleton was guarding a flank 250 miles long with only an infantry division, the bulk of an armored division, and a cavalry group. This was no mean job, especially when added to the major task at Brest.³⁰

Photographs taken shortly after the city was finally captured show extensive fortifications, concrete gun emplacements, pillboxes and troop shelters as well as ancient but thick city walls which required extensive artillery and air support in order to reduce.³¹ Blumenson described the total effect of this formidable series of fortifications:

The defenses of Brest were strong. Around the outskirts, about six miles from the center of the city, a series of hills afforded excellent outpost positions on the landward approaches. Behind the hills were two rings of fortifications. The outer ring was composed of ancient forts. The inner ring was built around an old fortress wall enclosing the naval base and the heart of Brest, a wall up to thirty feet thick. The Germans used both the natural features and the French fortifications as the base for a modern fortress. Concrete emplacements, casemates and pillboxes, anti-tank ditches, road barricades and minefields blocked the approaches. Howitzers and flat trajectory guns, with cleared fields of fire, covered them - guns stripped from ships sunk in the harbor by Allied planes, anti-aircraft guns sited for a ground function as well as for air defense, batteries of coastal and field artillery on peninsulas nearby emplaced originally

to protect the sea entrance into the bay of Brest. Almost 40,000 troops defended the port.³²

Expected by the higher command echelons to take six days and to be completed by 1 September the city was finally captured on 19 September after 27 days of grueling, bloody fighting. Middleton considered adequate supplies to be his major problem in reducing and capturing Brest. His preliminary estimate was 8,700 tons initially, plus replenishment of 11,600 tons for the first three days. Third Army considered this excessive since they felt the job could be done with only two divisions and ten corps artillery battalions, assuming that VIII Corps had overestimated the strength of the garrison.³³ Third Army allotted only 5,000 tons for the entire operation, an allotment which quickly proved woefully inadequate. It eventually required three divisions, a separate task force, eighteen corps artillery battalions, sixteen division artillery and tank destroyer battalions³⁴ and Bradley's assignment of first priority of supplies to the operation to make it succeed.³⁵ The result of this "knockdown, dragout, slugging contest over a secondary objective"³⁶ was the capture of a port which had been pounded into total uselessness as a supply base. Described by a participant in the early stage of the battle as "an operation totally without value (other than prestige)"³⁷, Bradley admitted that the 9,831 casualties and thousands of tons of valuable supplies consumed during the operation were "far too high a price to pay to maintain illusions of invincibility ... but ... Brest had taken on a symbolic value far exceeding its utilitarian value and, perhaps imprudently, I was stubbornly determined to capture it."³⁸ That its capture produced no useful port is without debate, but the

criticism that the Brest operation adversely affected the pursuit across France is probably groundless. Blumenson writes that "The expenditures at Brest were slender when compared to the total Allied expenditures on the main front. More important, it was the absence of an adequate supply system on the Continent that limited the pursuit."³⁹

Middleton's battered corps was withdrawn from the Brittany Peninsula and moved to a quiet sector of the Allied front in order to refit, recuperate and recover its full combat abilities. During October, the VIII Corps was moved into positions in the dark forests and twisting narrow roads of the Ardennes.

The Ardennes remained a brooding, silent but quiet sector through November and into December as the fighting war swirled around it on both sides. In this haven for played-out, exhausted units or green troops fresh from the states, the VIII Corps, by December 16, had four divisions to secure "the long, desolate front ... these were north to south: the newly arrived 106th Division, the 28th Division, the 4th Division (badly chewed up in the November offensive) and the 9th Armored."⁴⁰ From an overall perspective:

The three infantry divisions under Middleton's command were responsible for a front of about eighty-five miles, a distance approximately three times that normally assigned an equivalent defending force by U.S. service school teaching and tactical doctrine. On the morning of 16 December the total assigned strength of the VIII Corps was 68,822 officers and men. Immediately after the Battle of the Bulge, the tag "a calculated risk" would be applied to the attenuated VIII Corps front as it existed on 16 December. Middleton was well aware of the risk - indeed he had made this clear in discussions with his superiors.⁴¹

Middleton's superiors, Bradley and Eisenhower, accepted the risks involved although Bradley considered an Ardennes "attack only

a remote possibility."⁴² When Eisenhower questioned Bradley about the vulnerability of Middleton's sector during an inspection tour on 7 December, Bradley explained that "he could not strengthen the Ardennes area without weakening Patton's and Hodges' offensives, and that if the Germans counterattacked in the Ardennes they could be hit on either flank and stopped long before they reached the Meuse River ... Eisenhower was satisfied by Bradley's explanation."⁴³

Securing a wide, thinly held front was not a new task for Middleton. In Sicily, his 45th Division had once held a forty-five mile front and they repeated this with similar success later in Italy⁴⁴, but the overwhelming strength of the German attack in the early morning hours of 16 December was a terrifying new experience:

Two German Panzer armies of twenty-four divisions had struck Middleton's corps of three divisions. The Germans had managed to achieve both complete surprise and overwhelming local superiority, and an eight to one advantage in infantrymen and a four to one advantage in tanks ... the Germans had completely fooled an intelligence service that liked to think of itself as the best in the world. No one saw the buildup in the Eifel; no one expected anything more than local German counterattacks; no one anticipated that the Germans would be capable of attacking in even greater strength than they had done against the French in May 1940, and over the same ground at that.⁴⁵

The full force of the German attack fell on the veteran 28th Division and the untried 106th Division which had taken over its defensive positions from the 2nd Division barely five days earlier.⁴⁶ Over the course of the next few days, both units were destroyed as cohesive, effective fighting forces and Middleton was forced to use every asset at his command to try to slow the German advance:

On the morning of 16 December, General Middleton's VIII Corps had a formal corps reserve consisting of one armored combat command and four engineer combat battalions. In dire circumstances, Middleton might count on three

additional engineer combat battalions which, under First Army command, were engaged as the 1128th Engineer Group in direct support of the normal engineer operations on foot in the VIII Corps area. In exceptionally adverse circumstances, that is under conditions then so remote as to be hardly worth a thought, the VIII Corps would have a last combat residue - poorly armed and ill-trained for combat - made up of rear echelon headquarters, supply and technical service troops, plus the increment of stragglers who might, in the course of battle, stray back from the front lines. General Middleton would be called upon to use all of these "reserves". Their total effect in the fight to delay the German forces hammering through the VIII Corps center would be extremely important but at the same time generally incalculable, nor would many of these troops enter the pages of history.⁴⁷

The disruption caused by the overwhelming attack made the maintenance of a cohesive defense virtually impossible. In some areas along the wide breakthrough front "panic, sheer unreasoning panic, flamed ... all day and into the night. Everyone, it seemed, who had any excuse, and many who had none, was going west that day."⁴⁸ But Middleton remained calm at his headquarters in Bastogne and began to shore up weak spots, fill gaping holes in his line and create delays for the enemy as best he could. For the VIII Corps, the battle became a "battle of small units. People from different units pulled together and fought. Stragglers joined them. Road-blocks were held by small units."⁴⁹ "Middleton's corps, although badly battered and overrun, had not been destroyed. Small units continued to fight, often without any direction from above or any idea at all about what was happening around them. Individual acts of heroism abounded. As a result, the German timetable was badly off schedule ... American resistance was slowing the Germans and thereby causing terrific traffic jams."⁵⁰ The traffic jams centered

on the two key road junctions of St. Vith in the north and Bastogne further south. The 7th Armored Division's stand at St. Vith and the 101st Airborne Division's defense of Bastogne fatally delayed the German attack units and prevented the Germans from keeping to their timetable ultimately dooming the attack.⁵¹ Although most of the headlines for slowing and stopping the German thrust would be claimed by these two reinforcing units, the work done by VIII Corps "engineers, artillery and other small detachments who fought to delay the enemy advance"⁵² was significant. Official historian Hugh Cole described this effort:

A handful of ordnance mechanics manning a Sherman tank fresh from the repair shop are seen at a bridge. By their mere presence they check an enemy long enough for the bridge to be demolished. The tank and its crew disappear. They have affected the course of the Ardennes battle, even though minutely, but history does not record from where they came or whither they went. A single officer checking his wire along a byroad encounters a German column; he wheels his jeep and races back to alert a section of tank destroyers standing at a cross-road. Both he and the gunners are and remain anonymous. Yet the tank destroyers with a few shots rob the enemy of precious minutes even hours. A platoon of engineers appears in one terse sentence of a German commander's report. They have fought bravely, says the foe, and forced him to waste a couple of hours in deployment and maneuver. In this brief emergence from the fog of war the engineer platoon makes its bid for recognition in history. That is all. A small group of stragglers suddenly become tired of what seems to be eternally retreating. Miles back they ceased to be part of an organized combat formation, and recorded history, at that point, lost them. The sound of firing is heard, for fifteen minutes, an hour, coming from a patch of woods, a tiny village, the opposite side of a hill. The enemy has been delayed; the enemy resumes the march westward. Weeks later a graves registration team uncovers mute evidence of a last ditch stand at woods, village or hill.⁵³

Ultimately, all these efforts were successful as the German drive slowed, stalled and then reversed its course, receding

back to the prepared defenses of the Siegfried Line. Bradley wrote that the VIII Corps "though shattered by the offensive, had cost the enemy far more delay than he could afford ... Troy was entitled to pride in the VIII Corps, for his divisions had rallied nobly in a furious delaying struggle that emphasized the resourcefulness of the American soldier."⁵⁴

In the three months remaining in the European war, Middleton and the VIII Corps joined the Allied offensives moving swiftly eastward. On 3 March, 12th Army Group launched Operation LUMBERJACK which carried VIII Corps to the Rhine:

The attack was carried out by Middleton's VIII Corps abutting Huebner's V Corps on the Ahr and Eddy's XII Corps on Middleton's right. Walker's XX Corps remained anchored in the Trier area.

LUMBERJACK was very nearly flawless, the kind of campaign generals dream about but seldom see. All five corps of both armies advanced according to plan with dazzling speed and elan.⁵⁵

Crossing that last major barrier into the German heartland, VIII Corps continued to advance against weakening German resistance. Once again under First Army control, VIII Corps ended the war in the Thuringer Forest near the Czechoslovakian border. Shortly thereafter the VIII Corps completed its wartime mission and General Middleton returned home. He had been away from home 1223 days since leaving in January 1942. Serving overseas for twenty-four months and in combat 480 days, Middleton, his biographer claims, logged more combat time than any other American general officer in World War II.⁵⁶

Analysis of General Middleton's Personal Leadership

Calm and steady in the face of a crisis, Middleton's personal leadership has been described as exhibiting a characteristic moderation and tolerance expected from this "fatherly ROTC instructor and university dean."⁵⁷ Considered by Patton "as the most consistently reliable of his corps chieftains, [Middleton was] never spectacular but almost always cool and tactically skillful."⁵⁸ An official army historian characterized Middleton's personal leadership as "deliberate and calm but tenacious, [and] he was regarded by Bradley and Patton as one of the best tacticians in the U.S. Army."⁵⁹ At war's end, Middleton's staff presented their commander with a farewell gift which:

... meant more than it said. And for his Corps staff, it conveyed but little of the great esteem in which they held their Corps commander. As Middleton's aide, John Cribbet, said, "Above all he understood the nature of war and the nature of men. His ability to work with people of diverse talents, to proceed without the necessity of raising his voice - or even of issuing orders - to me was always a complete mystery. It seemed that he was able by quiet persuasion, by pointing out what needed to be done, to get people to carry out his exact orders."⁶⁰

Never considered a "star" like the ambitious and flashy Collins whose VII Corps piled success upon success as it roared across Europe, Middleton was nevertheless considered to be "not far behind and in the opinion of many not behind at all."⁶¹

Middleton's great asset was his unflappable calmness in adversity. He singled out this trait in a post war questionnaire on senior leadership, advising, "Be calm. Guard against becoming excited."⁶² He elaborated, writing that, "Calmness is one of the greatest virtues. Every officer I relieved during the war could

be classed among the excitable and jittery. The good Lord gave every person his share of common sense, the commander who does not use this valuable commodity is doomed."⁶³ Middleton displayed this trait consistently during his combat command but in no instance was it better demonstrated or more critically needed than during the dark days of the Battle of the Bulge. Even during the most difficult and crucial phases of the fighting, Middleton remained "completely calm and in command of himself."⁶⁴ While rallying his shattered units and confidently directing their desperate delaying actions, Middleton was outwardly "calm and optimistic."⁶⁵ This steadying influence was exactly what was needed in this unprecedented situation and was probably Middleton's finest hour and greatest contribution as a combat commander.

This great attribute was not always viewed positively by his superiors, however. During the difficult fighting on the Cotentin Peninsula, Eisenhower would have preferred a more enthusiastic, aggressive reaction from Middleton and wrote that "Middleton does not display the enthusiasm in his leadership that do the others," but admitted that "he is tactically sound and a very fine, straightforward workman."⁶⁶ This lack of an aggressive style deteriorated into discouragement and pessimism during the brutal attack on fortified Brest, and:

Discouraged, General Middleton wrote "a rather pessimistic letter" to General Bradley. He reported that his troops were "none to good", that replacement arrivals were behind schedule, that ammunition supply was poor though improving, and that air support "left much to be desired." The Germans had "no intention to fold up right away, having shown no signs of weakening." Middleton requested more 4.2 inch mortars, more artillery and more and better air support.⁶⁷

Middleton eventually received the support he needed, however, and his spirits rose accordingly. Furthermore, there is evidence that Eisenhower continued to hold Middleton's voluntary retirement against him as well as his lack of outward enthusiasm, for Eisenhower wrote to Marshall on 9 April 1945, concerning promotion of corps commanders to the rank of Lieutenant General, saying:

My intention had been to recommend on first list, Collins, Walker, Haislip and Middleton. They are the four corps commanders aside from Gerow, who is already promoted, who entered the battle prior to August 1. If original quota is three, I would remove Middleton in spite of fact he entered combat earlier than the other two. He was voluntarily retired for some years prior to the war and I feel that the other two, who have stuck with the job continuously, should get the call at this time.⁶⁸

Despite misgivings concerning his enthusiasm and hard feelings about his voluntary retirement, Eisenhower retained confidence in Middleton's steady, undramatic ability to skillfully command his corps and in Middleton's straightforward, uncomplicated judgment to make the hard, correct decisions when necessary. During the Battle of the Bulge, Middleton was required to make several of these hard choices, demonstrating his initiative and moral courage. Before the German onslaught began, Middleton was gravely concerned about the exposed positions of his northern unit. Hanging far out in front of the remainder of the corps line, these positions were politically important because they represented the first Allied penetrations of the West Wall and the higher command was not prepared to have them given up:

The northern positions, strategically important because we possessed this segment of the West Wall, were nevertheless difficult to hold because of their exposed nature. Several times General Middleton

requested permission to withdraw from this penetration of the German defensive positions to straighten out his line along more tenable positions some ten miles to the west. Permission was not granted because of the tactical importance of the penetration of the West Wall. So exposed were two of the battalions, however, that supply of them could be effected only at night. Finally Middleton, in desperation, withdrew these two battalions without authority from higher headquarters and blew up some twenty-five pillboxes which had been occupied in that area.⁶⁹

Another example of Middleton's moral courage and initiative was his effective but unorthodox use of armor during the critical phases of the Ardennes attack. As a former general staff school instructor and an acknowledged expert in tactics, Middleton knew the textbook solutions for use of tanks as well as anyone, but he also knew that his corps' desperate situation required daring, unorthodox actions. Middleton explained later:

I went against the book and broke up our armor into task forces. When Bill Roberts came up to Bastogne on December 18 with his combat command [of 10th Armored Division], I asked him how much strength he had. Then I told him to break up his fine outfit into three task forces. Bill didn't like it at all. He told me, "Troy, that's no way to use armor," and I told him that I knew it as well as he did. But we weren't fighting any textbook war there. Without some armor to back up our roadblocks, we couldn't have stopped anything.⁷⁰

The moral courage Middleton demonstrated by going against established practice and doctrine had been shown earlier, when he risked the personal animosity of George Patton, his army commander during the Sicily Campaign, but publicly defending soldier-cartoonist Bill Mauldin whose cartoons had raised Patton's ire.⁷¹ This incident is also characteristic of Middleton's confidence and faith in his subordinates' abilities and judgment. Middleton felt that, if you are a senior commander, you should always, "show

confidence in your staff and your commanders."⁷² He put great faith in the judgment of the commander on the scene of the action and often deferred to his subordinate commanders who would know the local situation better than he did at corps. During the early hours of the Ardennes attack:

... Major General Jones, 106th Division commander, still expecting the early arrival of the 7th Armored Division as promised ..., after once ordering the two regiments on the Schnee Eifel to withdraw and fight their way back, rescinded his order and told them to fight it out. Middleton had previously suggested to Jones that he withdraw the troops from the Schnee Eifel, but he left the decision to the division commander who was on the scene. Jones took the opposite course, but Middleton felt that although Jones made the wrong decision, he made it in good faith, based on information then available to him.⁷³

But he tempered this trust and faith in his subordinates with a higher regard for the welfare of his troops and the accomplishment of the mission. Middleton wrote, "If you do not have confidence in a person then make a change. Look after the welfare of your troops."⁷⁴ True to this belief, Middleton moved swiftly to relieve those subordinate commanders in whom he no longer had confidence and on whose abilities he no longer counted. Middleton's biographer explained that, "When he was faced with the necessity of relieving a commander, Middleton did not hesitate. He wrote as charitably as he could of the commander's deficiencies."⁷⁵ During the slow, grinding advance through the hedgerows of the Cotentin Peninsula, Middleton relieved several subordinates when their units failed to achieve the desired results. By 26 July when VIII Corps renewed its attack southward, "Middleton had already relieved two regimental commanders as well as the original commanding general of the disappointing 8th [Division]."⁷⁶ In the June fighting, Middleton had

already relieved two regimental commanders and the commanding general of the 90th Division due to the unit's disappointing lack of cohesion and vigor.⁷⁷ Despite these reliefs, the VIII Corps offensive continued at a snail's pace and remained a disappointment to the American command. The corps had consumed "10,000 casualties to cross eleven kilometers of the Bocage, and ... was only one-third of the way to the original corps objective."⁷⁸ Only through the COBRA bombing and breakthrough was the German resistance finally smashed and the VIII Corps broken free. Middleton, although never hesitating to relieve for cause, was also prepared to utilize a relieved officer in any capacity in which he had confidence in the officer's ability. This was illustrated in the case of Colonel Hurley Fuller, relieved of command during the Cotentin battles but who would later provide Middleton staunch service in the critical days in the Ardennes:

Hurley Fuller had been known for two things: his fighting qualities and his cantankerous disposition. Commanding a regiment of the 2nd Infantry Division during the Normandy Campaign, Fuller's irascibility had come to overshadow his virtues in the minds of his superiors. He had been relieved. Fuller had then gone to this old friend, Major General Troy Middleton at VIII Corps ... to state his plight. Middleton ... had retained confidence in Fuller and asked General Bradley to give Fuller another chance for action. Only recently Fuller had joined the 110th Infantry, holding the thinnest sector of the VIII Corps line [in the Ardennes].⁷⁹

Reading a letter Middleton wrote explaining the relief of a division commander during the Rhineland Campaign provides insight into Middleton's views on leadership. He listed the reasons for the officer's relief, stating that the officer's division was: timid and over cautious; not well coordinated; subordinates do not appreciate their proper functions; lacking confidence; stopped

when fired on by the enemy; not planning well; not aggressive; not using tanks and infantry as a team.⁸⁰ In addition to these points which he obviously felt were important, Middleton wrote that a successful senior leader must have knowledge, experience, humanity and common sense. He believed there was "no place for the showman in command of others" and that "the bluffer would not last long in command of troops."⁸¹

Throughout his combat service in World War II Middleton was plagued by an arthritic knee which prevented him from being in top physical condition at all times. Hospitalized in November 1943, Middleton was forced to give up command of the 45th Division in Italy and seek treatment at Walter Reed Hospital. It was during this treatment that Eisenhower selected him, despite his physical disability, to lead a corps into Europe:

For the first follow-on corps, Eisenhower picked another old friend, Troy Middleton, but only after an exchange of views with Marshall. An objection had been raised to Middleton on physical grounds, which - according to Bradley - led Marshall to remark, "I would rather have a man with arthritis in the knee than one with arthritis in the head." Eisenhower's version was different; he recalled that he asked Marshall for Middleton but Marshall replied, "Fine. I agree with you in his values. But he's in Walter Reed Hospital with his knees." To which Eisenhower replied, "I don't give a damn about his knees; I want his head and his heart and I'll take him into battle on a litter if we have to."⁸²

Whichever version is true, and there may be truth to both anecdotes, the point is that Middleton's superiors were willing to overlook his physical condition in order to capitalize on his proven ability to command in combat and his well demonstrated military sense. But his physical problems continued to the end of the war, causing Bradley to replace his VIII Corps in Patton's Third Army

with General Van Fleet's III Corps to enable the latter to take part in the last great effort of the war, Patton's Danube offensive. Bradley's stated reasons for the switch included his intention "to spare Middleton further discomfort."⁸³

Despite great pain and discomfort, Middleton's personal leadership, while emphasizing a calm, quiet approach to crises, was always characterized by an energy and activity that left no doubt concerning his command of the situation. As a final picture of his personal leadership, this description by General Raymond McLain, former artillery commander in Middleton's 45th Division and himself an excellent corps commander, serves to capture the essence of Middleton's style during his greatest achievement:

I could visualize what was going on in Middleton's corps [during the Battle of the Bulge]. I had served with Middleton at Salerno and had seen him going from place to place all night long during the fierce German attacks, stabilizing units, encouraging commanders, filling in where gaps occurred, directing the organization of positions, and meeting all sorts of emergencies. He had not returned to his command post for a little rest until after 0400, and then only after the German threats had been stopped. I could see him now following the same pattern in the Ardennes. His objective, with his crippled corps, was to slow down the German armies. Middleton did it magnificently, and has never been given adequate credit for his great performance.⁸⁴

Analysis of General Middleton's Technical Competence

Middleton enjoyed an Army-wide reputation as an expert, knowledgeable tactician and General Marshall wrote across the top of Middleton's request for return to active duty in 1942, "This man was the outstanding infantry regimental commander on the battlefield in France [in 1918]."⁸⁵ He continued to build upon and expand this reputation during his service as 45th Division commander

in Sicily and Italy, causing Eisenhower to write on his efficiency report that, "General Middleton's performance to date in active operations as Commanding General of the Forty-fifth Division has been superior. He is apparently living up to the fine reputation he has always had as a combat commander."⁸⁶

Middleton's technical competence was not only gained through battlefield experience, but through his studies at the Command and General Staff School and the Army War College and through his service as an instructor at the Infantry School and at Leavenworth. Teaching at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth during the critical, formative phase for many officers who would later rise to fame on World War II battlefields, Middleton had a significant effect:

Through the four classes Middleton taught from 1924 to 1928 came almost all the men who were to command divisions in Europe in World War II. At one time in World War II, every corps commander in Europe had been a student under Middleton at the Command and General Staff School.⁸⁷

Middleton was able to apply the tactics and procedures he had taught at the Staff School, during the reduction of the fortified port city of Brest in September, 1944. Middleton's practical application of the tactics and procedures he had studied earlier also caused him to develop new techniques to deal with the special situation confronting his corps. The powerful defenses of this city, manned by over twice the number of Germans that had been estimated to be there⁸⁸ required all Middleton's skill as a tactician and combat commander. Middleton recorded his combined arms tactics for this operation, writing:

Aerial bombardment and artillery fire are extremely effective in producing shock and causing personnel to temporarily remain in shelters. However, this advantage of tremendous fire power by indirect fire weapons is almost entirely lost unless infantry assault units follow concentrations closely and attack immediately following bombardment. This requires a high degree of coordination between supporting weapons and assault infantry, and a determined aggressive leadership of infantry assault units.⁸⁹

The city was finally taken by concentrated assaults on carefully selected sections to effect exploitable penetrations using "massed artillery fires, fighter bombers, tanks, flame throwers, tank destroyers, ... mortars and point blank fire by assault artillery."⁹⁰

Still in many ways the teacher, Middleton caused his staff to produce a detailed study of the attack and reduction of this fortified area "with the object of determining whether new lessons, learned on the field of battle, might be of benefit to other organizations of our armed forces."⁹¹ His Army commander at the time, General Simpson, described the study and the action:

The action of the VIII Corps at Brest constitutes a very unusual chapter in the history of the United States Army. I feel that the VIII Corps' application of our standard doctrine of attack of fortified localities, its development of new tactics and techniques to accommodate the unusual situations encountered and to utilize special equipment available, and its final success ... reflects great credit upon the Corps Commander and his entire command.

I further feel that such a report as this, with its extensive pictorial coverage, is extremely valuable as an historical record ... and as a reference for possible future study of the tactical doctrine.⁹²

Middleton's hard won success at Brest had been preceded by some controversy concerning the VIII Corps sweep across the Brittany Peninsula in which many armor proponents criticized Middleton's advance. While the 4th and 6th Armored Divisions were

leading the VIII Corps race across Brittany, Middleton, concerned about his ability to control his strung out columns, issued a controversial order:

As indications of enemy build up in the Dinan-St. Malo region increased, Middleton began to experience a growing uneasiness. Though the 83rd Division had begun to advance toward Pontorson, it could not possibly be there for another day. Learning that the 6th Armored Division had in reality bypassed Dinan, Middleton diverted it from its Brest run. His explanation: "We are getting too strung out. We must take Dinan and St. Malo before we can proceed." What appeared unreasonable to Grow [6th Armored Division Commander] was reasonable from Middleton's point of view.⁹³

Such an action was completely in keeping with Middleton's plans for the conduct of the Brittany campaign and were based upon, "orderly advances ... made to specific objectives by units developing a compact fighting front ... the same formation employed so successfully during the post-COBRA exploitation to Avranches."⁹⁴ But slowing the 6th Armored Division in its race for Brest was not well received by the speed oriented armor commanders and much criticism has been leveled at Middleton for what has been perceived as his failure to appreciate the true use of armored forces.⁹⁵ They claim that the "delay caused by Middleton's orders of August 3 ... allowed the Germans to withdraw their coastal garrisons from all over Western Brittany into Brest, and thus make formidable a fortress that Grow could have taken if he had arrived there a day earlier."⁹⁶ However this parochial argument ignores the true situation and "it seems impossible that Grow's division alone could have captured the place even before the garrison attained its full strength of 38,000."⁹⁷

Additionally, although the VIII Corps' ultimate objectives were the ports,⁹⁸ the establishment of strong forces in the neck of

the peninsula was a specific order from 12th Army Group to Third Army, an order Patton was attempting to ignore. Bradley agreed with Middleton and instructed him to, "order the 79th [Infantry Division] down to Fougères [in the Brittany neck] and we'll build up there as George was told to do."⁹⁹

This was not the first time that Middleton's technical competence was criticized by armor "experts" and he had already demonstrated that his common sense and tactical judgment was unbounded by blind obedience to doctrine during the Cotentin fighting:

Earlier in the month [of July], to the horror of some armored experts who had protested that an armored division should not be used to hold a static front, General Middleton had assigned the 4th [Armored Division] a portion of the defensive line on the Carentan - Periers isthmus. There during the week before COBRA, the division had learned enough of actual combat to acquire a confidence that was evident in its operations of 28 and 29 July. To take advantage of these factors, Middleton gave Avranches, the Corps objective to General Wood. The 6th Armored Division was to capture Brehal and Granville.¹⁰⁰

This unorthodox use of his armor assets had allowed the 4th Armored Division to receive "just enough seasoning to give it a battlefield sharpness uncommon to new divisions by the time it became a corps spearhead."¹⁰¹ Middleton, despite these criticisms, had a great appreciation for the mobility and potential benefits of swift armored thrusts. His use of Wood's 4th Armored Division at Avranches demonstrates this¹⁰² as does his innovation of attaching quartermaster trucks to his infantry divisions to create motorized regimental combat teams ready to assist his armored divisions.¹⁰³

The true test of Middleton's technical competence, however, came during the Battle of the Bulge when he was required to use

all his knowledge, skill and common sense to bring some order out of the chaos and stem the German advance with any means possible.

Middleton realized from the beginning that he would have to hold the critical communications hubs of St. Vith and Bastogne for as long as possible if he were to fatally slow the German advance. Although several others in high command came to the same conclusion independently, including Bradley¹⁰⁴ and Eisenhower's Deputy G-3¹⁰⁵ and everyone seemed to want to take credit for making the decision to put the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, Middleton later pointed out that, after looking at a map of the area, "one did not have to be a genius to know that St. Vith and Bastogne were critical points during the Battle of the Bulge."¹⁰⁶ Even Patton finally realized its significance although he had initially berated Middleton for allowing the 101st to become surrounded there.¹⁰⁷

To carry out his plans of delay, Middleton was forced to use tactics which were not always consistent with doctrine. His frontage so overextended as to make a conventional defense impossible, Middleton counted on his divisions making the best use possible of the restrictive terrain and their meager resources to establish "islands of defense [to make] the Germans pay a disproportionate price for their moves against [the VIII Corps]."¹⁰⁸ Following this, the units entered the phase of "piecemeal" reaction; during which Middleton "was trying to plug the yawning gap in [his] front with rifle platoons of engineers and mechanics"¹⁰⁹ and anything else to slow the Germans. Historian Hugh Cole described Middleton's efforts:

The story of the units that were retained under tactical control and employed directly by General Middleton in the attempt to form some defense in depth

in the VIII Corps Center has been partially recorded ... The effect that these units had in retarding the German advances, a course of action evolving extemporaneously, must be considered along with the role played by the uncoordinated front-line formations in the haphazard sequence of the delaying actions ... With the very limited forces at his disposal ... the VIII Corps commander found it physically impossible to erect any of the standard defenses taught in the higher Army schools or prescribed in the field service regulations. The best he could do to defend the extended front was to deploy his troops as a screen retaining local reserves for local counterattacks at potentially dangerous points ... Under the circumstances there could be no thought of an elastic defense with strong formations echeloned in any depth ... [Middleton had to] attempt to plug a few of the gaps in the forward line, slow the enemy columns on a few main roads, and strengthen by human means two or three of the natural physical barriers deep in the corps rear area.¹¹⁰

Although ultimately his tactics proved sound and were exactly what was necessary to save the situation, there have been critics of these efforts also. One criticism is that Middleton's use of his engineers as infantry to plug holes in the line was not the most profitable use of these trained technicians. The argument states that the engineers could have slowed the Germans more effectively if they had been utilized as a single group preparing barriers and strongpoints. However, as Cole points out, "It is questionable whether the 7th Armored Division would have had time to establish itself at St. Vith, not to speak of the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, without the intervention of the engineer battalions."¹¹¹ In other words, the situation required that they be used as infantry to buy time for the defenses of the critical road junctions.

A similar criticism concerns Middleton's break up of Colonel William L. Roberts' Combat Command B, 10th Armored Division, to slow the German advance on Bastogne. A report written at the

Armor School after the war criticized the decision which caused "portions of [CCB, 10th Armored Division to be] drawn into separate isolated actions instead of being employed decisively as a unit."¹¹² But once again, this completely ignores the true situation existing around Bastogne at the time and the authors of this criticism obviously did not comprehend the "extraordinary situation and need for this method of employment."¹¹³ CCB's armor was desperately needed at several critical points simultaneously:

Middleton poked a finger at his map (marked, someone later said like an advanced case of measles) and told Roberts to send three teams out at once, to Noville five miles up the highway from Houffalize; to Longvilly, five miles out the road toward Clervaux; and to Wardin, off the road from Wiltz about three miles east. Roberts didn't like his orders but he obeyed them promptly. Armor, he thought, should stick together. Instead, Middleton wanted him to scatter it all over the landscape. The scattering couldn't have been more fortunate, as it turned out.¹¹⁴

Fortunate, indeed, were Eisenhower and Bradley to have a man in command whose obvious technical competence was tempered by a rare common sense which allowed him to tailor doctrine and tactics to fit the situation. That his actions were ultimately correct is perhaps best indicated by Patton's recommendation late in the war that Middleton deserved command at an even higher echelon.¹¹⁵

Analysis of General Middleton's Organizational Leadership

Middleton demonstrated repeatedly throughout the European campaigns an ability to organize and direct his staffs' efforts toward the common unit goal. He had exhibited this talent early in the war with the 45th Division causing Army Ground Forces Commander, General Leslie McNair, to write that the 45th was the best prepared division to leave his control and that this was due

to the supervision, leadership and efforts of Middleton and his staff.¹¹⁶ Middleton never needed a large staff, even as corps commander, and his corps staff numbered fewer than seventy-five officers at its peak. Middleton explained this by saying, "I never was much for using more men than were needed to get the job done."¹¹⁷ This reliance on a small staff was characteristic of Middleton's emphasis on using normal staff procedures to reach simple solutions. He remarked on this after the war, writing that, while developing staff estimates, his officers attempted to, "avoid any steps leading to a complicated situation which might suggest a complicated solution."¹¹⁸ Middleton's written remarks in a questionnaire on senior leadership, emphasized simplicity and straightforward solutions several times, indicating how important he felt this was to keep the staff and subordinates focused on the unit goal. In addition to simplicity, Middleton emphasized using the normal, standard staff procedures in his headquarters and he managed to always maintain calm control of the situation. His wartime aide remarked:

I never knew a man who had such equanimity under stress and who had the ability to master all the details with such apparent ease. At the same time he was a warm, friendly individual who was adored by all members of his corps staff, and everyone had complete confidence in his ability.¹¹⁹

Middleton's organizational leadership abilities were severely challenged by the increased tempo of combat during and after the breakout from the Cotentin peninsula into Brittany:

General Middleton, methodical and meticulous, found himself in a whirlwind that threatened to upset his ideas of orderly and controlled progress. The transfer of VIII Corps from First to Third Army brought changes in staff procedures, communications, and supply, but these were minor when compared to the exigencies that emerged in rapid succession as a result

of the change from the positional hedgerow warfare in the Cotentin to wide-open exploitation in Brittany.¹²⁰

That Middleton was able to adapt himself and his staff to these abrupt changes is a tribute to his ability to quickly seize the essence of a plan and rapidly change the focus of the unit to coincide. This was especially critical in this instance since:

In England, Middleton's VIII Corps staff had developed with care at least five plans for the exploitation out of the Cotentin, but now events moved so rapidly that none of the plans was applied. "The plan the VIII Corps used in finally breaking out of the peninsula was played by ear - strictly off the cuff," said Middleton later. "Our action depended on what the enemy had done and was doing."¹²¹

Even though he and his staff were able to exploit the situation by quickly adapting plans to react to rapid changes, Middleton was clearly uncomfortable when his armored divisions raced off across Brittany with no regard for their flanks or rear areas and little contact with VIII Corps headquarters:

Ignorance of what his spearheads were doing, and where, aggravated the concerns of Middleton, who was not a cavalryman, that his units were ranging too far too recklessly without enough regard for the safety of their flanks. Middleton was by no means a timid officer ... but having his corps charge off in opposite directions at once without communication and thus without central control was too much for him to accept. Moreover, by August 2, he was out of touch with Patton, who was chasing his army's spearheads and also unreachable from corps headquarters.¹²²

Bradley agreed with Middleton's assessment of the situation and supported his efforts to strengthen the vulnerable center of his corps area.¹²³ By the end of August, the situation had stabilized and VIII Corps was preparing to conduct the attack of Brest, a completely different type of operation than the race across the Brittany peninsula. The focus of Middleton's efforts for the

Brest operation changed from attempting to control widely dispersed units to that of struggling with higher headquarters to obtain the amount of supplies necessary to successfully reduce the formidable fortification. Middleton's corps, forced by the major campaign in the east racing toward the Seine into the "position of stepchildren, denied primary rights on supplies that were already far too meagerly available" was continually hampered in its combat operations by inadequate logistical support.¹²⁴ It was only after Middleton personally convinced Bradley of the critical need for more tonnage that the operation succeeded.

Middleton's ability to rapidly grasp the implications of the German attack in the Ardennes allowed him to quickly focus the efforts of his staff to make the maximum effective use of VIII Corps' battered units. When the German attack began on 16 December, Middleton was awakened by a guard and could hear immediately the big guns firing. Middleton recalled, "By 10 a.m. I had word that elements of sixteen different divisions had been identified in the attacking force," indicating to him that it was no spoiling attack.¹²⁵ As the day progressed, and despite severe communications difficulties, "Enough information filtered into the VIII Corps command post at Bastogne, ... to enable Middleton to formulate his countermeasures."¹²⁶ Regaining control of the battle was Middleton's primary concern and the focus of his staff's efforts:

To regain control of the battle had of course been the special concern of General Middleton at VIII Corps headquarters at Bastogne. By evening of the first day, despite spreading communications failures, Middleton knew enough to begin resolving the apparently piecemeal German attacks of that morning into a picture of a major offensive seemingly aimed at reaching the Meuse at Liege. That

evening Middleton still felt some hope that his brittle front line might hold - but not much hope. He ordered all units to cling to their positions until they became "completely untenable". Anticipating the rupture of the front nevertheless, Middleton resolved that he must block the few major road junctions of the Ardennes ... 127

Beginning to sort some order out of the mass of confusion, Middleton and his staff dispatched units to critical portions of the line, reacted to enemy advances as best they could and continued to try and stay current with the extremely fluid situation. Middleton's biographer refutes the assessment by General Ridgway that VIII Corps headquarters on 19 December was completely unaware of the total situation, when he wrote, "After three days of fighting the picture was far from promising, but Middleton had a pretty clear idea of what the Germans were after, how they proposed to go about getting it and even where they were now heavily engaged by American defenders Middleton had sent to defensive positions."¹²⁸ Given the total effect of VIII Corps actions throughout this entire period, it is fair to admit that, VIII Corps staff and its commander assessed and controlled the situation as well as any group could have done. Middleton's organizational leadership was given its greatest test in the crucible of the Battle of the Bulge and it proved sound. Middleton, himself, provided what is probably the best succinct description of the reason for the success of his organizational leadership when he said, "If the method you're using doesn't work, try something else. The fellow who wrote the book couldn't think of everything."¹²⁹

Analysis of General Middleton's Management

Middleton caused his organization to function on a daily

basis by instituting and employing management techniques and procedures which emphasized standard and well established practice. At the beginning of each operation, Middleton would issue his planning directives to the "Chief of Staff and the heads of the four staff sections plus the artillery commander, the signal officer and the engineer officer."¹³⁰ These directives were usually issued orally due to time constraints and were kept as uncomplicated as possible. Middleton advised:

Avoid complicated maneuvers. To expect results from large numbers of men the operations must be kept simple. Information of what is expect[ed] of troops should reach all ranks. Avoid assigning tasks when results could not reasonably be expected.¹³¹

Once the necessary directives had been issued, Middleton let his staff and subordinate commanders work out details on their own, preferring to utilize mission-type orders. Middleton explained that he felt a senior commander should not unduly interfere with the subordinate's attempts to carry out the mission:

I followed the principle that once you have assigned a task to a person leave him alone. If he needs advice he will come to you. I held regular staff meetings, at these meetings many problems were resolved and teamwork resulted. When this is done, there is no need for constant interference.¹³²

After the orders for an operation had been issued and the plan set in motion, Middleton spent only about three hours a day at his headquarters. The remainder of the day was spent "out with the troops," at division, regiment and battalion level. Middleton made these visits "accompanied by an aide and a couple of soldiers and one additional jeep with radio."¹³³ He had discovered the necessity for regular visits to the front lines during his tour as Regimental Commander in World War I¹³⁴ and had the discovery

reinforced early in his combat service in World War II:

Middleton made it a policy to visit his forward units daily. The needed to know that their ... commander cared about their problems. "I needed to know what kinds of problems they were confronted with. I never took foolish chances, but I had to make those trips or risk going ignorant of some essential information."¹³⁵

The extended frontages in the Ardennes made it difficult for him to easily cover all his units, but he tried to visit all the positions he could and "put in long hours checking on his subordinate commander's troop dispositions and plans for dealing with an attack."¹³⁶ Especially in the exposed positions, "on the Schnee Eifel, [Middleton] wanted soldiers to know that [he] was interested in their welfare and ... aware of their exposed position ... There was plenty to do on a front so long."¹³⁷ Middleton also expected his staff to make regular visits to front line units and reported that, "All of my staff visited the front every two days."¹³⁸ He felt so strongly about this that he relieved his own Assistant Division Commander in the 45th Division for spending too much time at the command post doing paperwork, asserting that, "An assistant also needed to get out and to go forward to battalion level if he was to help in the decision making."¹³⁹

Middleton and his staff often used verbal orders to facilitate passing instructions to subordinate units.¹⁴⁰ VIII Corps Letters of Instruction often contain entries such as, "Confirming verbal instructions issued at 011700A January 1945,"¹⁴¹ and apparently these written confirmations were never very far behind the original, oral order. 11th Armored Division recorded:

Arrangements for delaying the attack until March 4, 1945 were cancelled by a telephone call from VIII Corps at 9:00 p.m. The Division was ordered to make its attack

not later than noon on March 3. An hour and a half later, Corps Operations Memorandum No. 27 was received by the 11th Armored Division confirming the telephone call ... 142

Middleton even issued these oral orders in person during his frequent frontline visits, for 11th Armored Division recorded on 1 January 1945 that, "Around 8:30 p.m. the VIII Corps Commander visited the advance CP ... and made an appraisal of the current situation. He then directed a consolidation and defense of ground gained for the following day."¹⁴³

Although Middleton was perfectly content to use oral orders to control his units, he was definitely uncomfortable when the speed and distance of his advancing units took them out of radio and telephone contact for relatively long periods. This problem was particularly acute during the race across the Brittany Peninsula. The two division commanders involved, Wood of the 4th Armored and Grow of the 6th Armored, "regarded themselves as belonging to the Patton school of thought" and they and "their units became infected with an enthusiasm and self-confidence ... perfectly suited to exploitation but proved ... a headache to those who sought to retain a semblance of control."¹⁴⁴ Middleton was gravely concerned about his ability to effectively manage these units as they became more and more independent of his corps command:

Control was the major problem of the Brittany campaign, and distance added to the problem. The VIII Corps command post was located north of Avranches and General Middleton was able to displace forward to a point several miles south of that city only on 4 August. By then combat components of the corps were scattered, out of sight and virtually out of hearing. Although Middleton wanted to move his command post into Brittany and closer to his far-flung units, the Third Army staff was most anxious for him not to displace the corps

headquarters beyond the limited range of field tele-
phones. Middleton complied. Communications between
the army and the corps headquarters remained satis-
factory, but this state of affairs was not duplicated
below the corps level. As early as 2 August, General
Middleton remarked that contact with the armored
divisions was "practically nil".¹⁴⁵

The situation worsened before it improved. By 5 August
only "fragmentary pieces of information" were reaching VIII Corps
and "Periodic progress reports took thirty-six hours to get ... to
the corps command post and were out of date when they arrived."¹⁴⁶
Middleton was virtually denying responsibility for 6th Armored
Division activities and wrote that, "This headquarters ... has
made repeated attempts to establish radio contact with the 6th
Armored Division without success. A special messenger was dis-
patched ... but his time of arrival cannot be stated. This head-
quarters will continue efforts to establish radio contact."¹⁴⁷
The situation was never satisfactorily controlled by VIII Corps and
improved only when the armored divisions reached the limits of
their advance at the shores of the peninsula. Middleton never
established an effective means of managing the activities of these
rapidly moving units.

Middleton's management style of encouraging subordinates
to cooperate and find joint solutions to sticky command problems
was also an area of criticism by observers and participants.
During the opening phases of the Battle of the Bulge, when the 7th
Armored Division was arriving at St. Vith to try to shore up the
crumbling defenses of the 106th Infantry Division, Middleton hesitated
to appoint an overall commander for the operation, preferring instead
to ask Hasbrouck, 7th Armored Commander, and Jones, 106th Division

Commander, to "carry the ball" for him.¹⁴⁸ This did little to clarify the command situation and only raised more questions in Hasbrouck's and Jones' minds,¹⁴⁹ but ultimately Hasbrouck and Clarke, CCA, 7th Armored Division Commander, took charge and sorted out the situation:

Middleton declined to put one man in charge of the sector, without doubt influenced by the fact that Hasbrouck, who commanded the bulk of the troops, was junior by one grade to Jones. But Middleton's preference for cooperation rather than unity of command caused less confusion than might be imagined. In the critical eastern sector, for example, two brigadier generals - Clarke and Hoge - simply cooperated on an equal basis. Indeed, true unity of command was not to be achieved until five days after the St. Vith sector had been occupied. In the meantime, Hasbrouck plugged the gaps in the line with his own troops regardless of the location of units attached to the 106th.¹⁵⁰

This situation was repeated temporarily at Bastogne between General McAuliffe, acting commander of the 101st Airborne Division, and Colonel Roberts of CCB, 10th Armored, when Middleton "asked the two men to cooperate, with neither in charge,"¹⁵¹ but corrected this on 20 December by calling Roberts and informing him that McAuliffe was in command.¹⁵² It is possible that Middleton made the decision to put McAuliffe in sole command after receiving advice from General Norm Cota who had recently had an opportunity to observe the Bastogne defenders.¹⁵³ Whatever the motivation, the establishment of command unity at Bastogne was propitious and timely. Middleton rightfully deserves some criticism for his method of instituting command unity during this period. Although he obviously understood the value of unity of command, his penchant for requesting commanders to "cooperate" was confusing.

As the Battle of the Bulge developed, Middleton needed all his skill as a battle manager to influence the events and attempt to control the action as best he could. By remaining calm and confident, and keeping his efforts focused on the primary goal of slowing the German advance by any and all means, Middleton was able to exert his control and management at whatever level was necessary to accomplish the mission. He was quickly forced to commit his tiny reserve from the 9th Armored Division which:

... was alerted on December 16 by Middleton. It shipped tank destroyers, and then a few tanks to the front; but they, too, were overwhelmed, and the rest of the command began to pull back to the west, confused by the turn of events. Just north of the ill-fated 110th Infantry, its sister regiment, the 112th Infantry, fought in a pocket around which the Germans flowed. It was cut off from the division by the fierce attack through the 110th Infantry, and was finally withdrawn by Middleton, the corps commander, in the absence of any orders from its division commander.¹⁵⁴

Middleton continued this forced, piecemeal employment of his scattered units throughout the fight, making split-second decisions that meant the difference between ultimate success or failure and life or death for his shattered corps. Scant minutes separated the report of a German advance from Middleton's orders designed to counter the move:

When it was clear that Clervaux and its bridges were in German hands, Middleton ordered the Ninth Armored's CCR to block the distant approaches to Bastogne. The order went out at [2140 hours] on December 17, ten minutes after Middleton was informed that German tanks had crossed the Clerf and had good highway surface under their treads.¹⁵⁵

This incident was multiplied a hundred times before the German advance was finally checked and driven back. In each of them, the personal influence of the corps commander was felt and

his calm, effective management of that critical situation was pivotal. Bruce Clarke, hero of St. Vith, provides an excellent summation of a general's role in such a situation as the Battle of the Bulge and which describes perfectly the effect of Middleton's management on the battle. Clarke wrote that the primary role of the general in such a mobile defense was "To prevent the confusion from becoming disorganized."¹⁵⁶ Middleton not only prevented the confusion from becoming disorganized, his effective management fatally slowed the Germans and ensured their eventual failure.

General Middleton's calm, simple approach to leadership obviously enhanced the effectiveness of his unit and allowed its combat power to be fully brought to bear on the enemy. This service during the dark hours in the Ardennes proved crucial to American effort and will stand as his testament.¹⁵⁷

NOTES

¹Services Cinema Corporation, Producer, "The Ardennes Offensive, 1944". (London: United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, 1979). Julian Ewell, a Battalion Commander in the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, is interviewed on-camera in this film prepared for the Royal Army and he gives this graphic description of Middleton's composure.

²Frank J. Price, Troy H. Middleton: A Biography (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1974), p. 68.

³Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., et al., ed. The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The War Years, 5 Volumes. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 4:2599.

⁴Price, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p.33.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 38.

⁹Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 61-66.

¹¹Ibid., p. 67.

¹²Ibid., p. 79.

¹³U.S. Department of the Army, Annual Reports of the Commandant, the General Service Schools, 1923-1928, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. Officers attending during Middleton's tenure were: Eisenhower, Devers, Patch, Simpson, Hodges, Stilwell, Eichelberger, Grow, Collins, Haislip, W. Walker, Milliken, Kenney and Brereton.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 98-99. Middleton had formed a close association with LSU during his service there as ROTC instructor and Commandant of Cadets. When the lucrative offer came to join the staff of the

University as a civilian, he had completed 27 years of active duty and his outlook for further promotion and advancement in the Army was not promising. At the time of his retirement, his promotion to full Colonel, a rank he had previously held in 1918, appeared to be several years away.

¹⁷ Stephen E. Ambrose, Eisenhower: Volume I Soldier, General of the Army, President-Elect, 1890-1952 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 114.

¹⁸ Ibid. In fairness to Eisenhower, it must be kept in mind that it was obvious that Middleton would return to retirement at the close of the war. Since promotion is not a reward for "services rendered" but a recognition of potential value to the service, Eisenhower wanted to promote those officers who would lead the post war Army.

¹⁹ Price, op. cit., pp. 137, 140, 141.

²⁰ Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, A General's Life: An Autobiography of General of the Army Omar N. Bradley (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 171.

²¹ Russell F. Weigley, Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaigns of France and Germany 1944-1945 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), pp. 121-122.

²² Price, op. cit., pp. 170-171.

²³ Weigley, op. cit., p. 121.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ John S. D. Eisenhower, The Bitter Woods (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1969), p. 39.

²⁶ Weigley, op. cit., p. 174.

²⁷ Martin Blumenson, "The Decision to Take Brest", Army, 10 (March 1960): 44.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 46.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 47.

³¹U.S. Department of the Army, VIII Corps, Attack of a Fortified Zone, 9 October 1944.

³²Blumenson, "Brest", p. 47.

³³Martin Blumenson, The United States Army in World War II. European Theater of Operations. Breakout and Pursuit (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 635-636.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 636-637.

³⁶Robert W. Grow, "Mobility Unused", Military Review, 32 (February 1953): 22.

³⁷Ibid., p. 24.

³⁸Bradley and Blair, op. cit., pp. 305-306.

³⁹Blumenson, "Brest", p. 48.

⁴⁰Bradley and Blair, op. cit., pp. 352-353.

⁴¹Hugh M. Cole, The United States Army in World War II. European Theater of Operations. The Ardennes: The Battle of the Bulge (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), p. 56.

⁴²Bradley and Blair, op. cit., p. 354.

⁴³Ambrose, op. cit., pp. 362-363.

⁴⁴Robert E. Merriam, Dark December (Chicago: Ziff-Davis, 1947), p. 75.

⁴⁵Ambrose, op. cit., p. 365. On the first day of the German assault, sixteen divisions struck the four division equivalents in the VIII Corps zone. Eventually, as the attack proceeded, twenty-four German divisions were involved.

⁴⁶U.S. Department of the Army, VIII Corps Letter of Instruction, 7 December 1944.

⁴⁷Cole, op. cit., p. 310.

⁴⁸R. Ernest Dupuy, St. Vith: Lion in the Way - The 106th Infantry Division in World War II (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1949), p. 72.

⁴⁹Price, op. cit., p. 269.

⁵⁰Ambrose, op. cit., pp. 366-367.

⁵¹Bruce C. Clarke, "The Battle for St. Vith: Armor in the Defense and Delay", Armor, 83 (November-December 1974): 39.

⁵²Cole, op. cit., p. 329.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 310-311.

⁵⁴Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier's Story (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951), p. 475.

⁵⁵Bradley and Blair, op. cit., p. 401.

⁵⁶Price, op. cit., p. 296. This claim may be misleading. Others, including Major General Lucian K. Truscott, appear to have remained in combat for extended periods as well. Suffice it to say that Middleton's combat longevity was equalled by few other general officers and it is unlikely that any of them had debilitating physical infirmities similar to Middleton's arthritic knee.

⁵⁷Weigley, op. cit., p. 180.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 586.

⁵⁹Cole, op. cit., p. 55.

⁶⁰Price, op. cit., p. 261.

⁶¹Chandler, et al., op. cit., 4:2442.

⁶²Franklin Institute, Art and Requirements of Command, Volume 2, Generalship Study (Philadelphia: Systems Science Department of the Franklin Institute, 1967) "Middleton Questionnaire", pp. 18-19.

⁶³Ibid., p. 26.

⁶⁴Eisenhower, op. cit., p. 311.

- ⁶⁵Ibid., p. 244.
- ⁶⁶Chandler, et al., op. cit., 3:1971.
- ⁶⁷Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, p. 644.
- ⁶⁸Chandler, et al., op. cit., 4:2595.
- ⁶⁹Merriam, op. cit., p. 74.
- ⁷⁰Price, op. cit., p. 270.
- ⁷¹Ibid., p. 160.
- ⁷²Franklin Institute, op. cit., pp. 18-19.
- ⁷³Merriam, op. cit., p. 150.
- ⁷⁴Franklin Institute, op. cit., pp. 18-19.
- ⁷⁵Price, op. cit., pp. 206-207.
- ⁷⁶Weigley, op. cit., pp. 157-158.
- ⁷⁷Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, p. 63.
- ⁷⁸Weigley, op. cit., p. 134.
- ⁷⁹Eisenhower, op. cit., p. 205.
- ⁸⁰Price, op. cit., pp. 282-283.
- ⁸¹Franklin Institute, op. cit., p. 26.
- ⁸²Ambrose, op. cit., p. 296.
- ⁸³Bradley and Blair, op. cit., p. 430.
- ⁸⁴Raymond S. McLain, "One of the Greatest: A Study in Leadership", Military Review 49 (December 1969): 25.
- ⁸⁵Price, op. cit., p. 135.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 163-164.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 91. Price's claim may be somewhat exaggerated and misleading. Inspection of the General Staff School records shows that while this was true very early in the campaigns following D-Day, as the number of corps rose, the number of corps commanders who attended the Staff School during Middleton's tenure dropped. However, there were a large number of officers in responsible positions who completed staff school while Middleton was there. (See also note 13)

⁸⁸ Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, p. 638.

⁸⁹ Attack of a Fortified Area, p. 4.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

⁹¹ Ibid., VIII Corps Cover Letter.

⁹² Ibid., Ninth Army Cover Letter.

⁹³ Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, p. 376.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 350.

⁹⁵ U.S. Department of the Army, 4th Armored Division, Armor in the Exploitation, the 4th Armored Division Across France to the Moselle River, May 1949, pp. 51-52.

⁹⁶ Weigley, op. cit., p. 185.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ U.S. Department of the Army, VIII Corps Field Order Number Nine, 1 August 1944, VIII Corps Field Order Number Ten, 2 August 1944.

⁹⁹ Bradley, op. cit., p. 363.

¹⁰⁰ Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, pp. 315-316.

¹⁰¹ Weigley, op. cit., p. 173.

¹⁰² Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, pp. 317-318.

- ¹⁰³Ibid., p. 314.
- ¹⁰⁴Bradley, op. cit., p. 467.
- ¹⁰⁵U.S. Department of the Army, 4th Armored Division, Armor at Bastogne, May 1949, p. 6.
- ¹⁰⁶Franklin Institute, op. cit., p. 15.
- ¹⁰⁷Price, op. cit., p. 262.
- ¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 269.
- ¹⁰⁹Cole, op. cit., p. 513.
- ¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 311.
- ¹¹¹Ibid., p. 329.
- ¹¹²Armor at Bastogne, p. 181.
- ¹¹³Eisenhower, op. cit., p. 308.
- ¹¹⁴Price, op. cit., p. 230.
- ¹¹⁵Chandler, et al., op. cit., 4:2597.
- ¹¹⁶Price, op. cit., p. 114.
- ¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 178.
- ¹¹⁸Franklin Institute, op. cit., pp. 2-5.
- ¹¹⁹Price, op. cit., p. 176.
- ¹²⁰Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, p. 350.
- ¹²¹Weigley, op. cit., p. 173.
- ¹²²Ibid., p. 182.
- ¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Blumenson, "Brest", pp. 47-48.

¹²⁵Price, op. cit., p. 215. There are many who must share the blame for the intelligence failures leading to the German surprise including Eisenhower and Bradley, but VIII Corps must accept criticism for not insisting on more active intelligence gathering activities from its divisions at the tactical level for the two months preceding the attack.

¹²⁶Cole, op. cit., pp. 311-312.

¹²⁷Weigley, op. cit., p. 480.

¹²⁸Price, op. cit., p. 228.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 85.

¹³⁰Franklin Institute, op. cit., pp. 6-8.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid., p. 10.

¹³³Ibid., p. 16.

¹³⁴Price, op. cit., p. 85.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 159.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 211.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Franklin Institute, op. cit., p. 10.

¹³⁹Price, op. cit., p. 159.

¹⁴⁰Hal D. Steward, Thunderbolt: The History of the Eleventh Armored Division (Nashville: Battery Press, 1981), p. 57.

¹⁴¹U.S. Department of the Army, VIII Corps Letter of Instruction, 1 January 1945.

¹⁴²Steward, op. cit., p. 87.

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁴⁴Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit, pp. 350-351.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 377.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 353.

¹⁴⁸Eisenhower, op. cit., p. 286.

¹⁴⁹Dupuy, op. cit., pp. 160-161.

¹⁵⁰Eisenhower, op. cit., p. 235.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 311.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 320.

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴Merriam, op. cit., pp. 113-144.

¹⁵⁵Price, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁵⁶Clarke, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁵⁷General Middleton returned to retirement after the war and became, eventually, President Emeritus of LSU. He spent the remaining years of his life at the University which had become his second home.

CHAPTER 5

AMERICAN ROMMEL - MAJOR GENERAL JOHN SHIRLEY WOOD

Introduction

A big, athletic, dynamic leader whose enthusiasm and drive seemed at times almost limitless, Major General John Shirley Wood established himself as one of the premier division commanders in the European Theater when he drove his 4th Armored Division faster and farther than anyone had thought possible, a feat reported as "unequaled in history."¹ Wood's aggressive, bold style was described in the 4th Armored Division's official history:

Under General Wood, the Fourth Armored's style of fighting was set ... It was a daring, hardriding, fast-shooting style. The division's front was as wide as the roads down which it sped. The recon men out front kept going until they hit resistance too hot to handle. Teams of tanks and armored infantrymen swung out smoothly in attack formation under the protective fire of the quickly emplaced artillery. The division broke the enemy or flowed about them, cutting the German lines of communication and splitting apart the units.²

Intensely loyal to his subordinates, Wood inspired a devotion from those he led which permeated the entire division and helped infuse an esprit de corps which made the 4th Armored Division highly respected throughout the Allied Armies and greatly feared by the Germans. Wood's reputation as a great battle commander of armored forces grew so large that it inspired the famous British military critic and theorist, Sir Basil H. Liddell Hart, to describe Wood as, "The Rommel of the American armored forces ...

one of the most dynamic commanders of armor in World War II."³
Certainly this was meant as one of the highest compliments Liddell Hart could pay and this recognition was deserved by Wood.

In the end, however, it was this very loyalty, enthusiasm and devotion which caused his relief when in early December 1944, physically exhausted and frustrated by mud and mounting casualties, Wood was reluctantly relieved and sent home to rest, never again to command in battle. But Wood's accomplishments are undimmed by this ending and there are few men who knew him who would disagree with General Middleton's assessment that "the Lord never produced a better combat leader than John Shirley Wood."⁴

Background and Early Career of General Wood: 1888-1942

Born the son of an Arkansas circuit judge, in 1888, Wood grew into a strapping, athletic young man whose "cultivated" parents had brought him up reading the classics and appreciating simple, traditional values. His intellect developed as rapidly as his physique and at the age of 16 Wood entered the University of Arkansas where his studies centered on the sciences. In three years he graduated with a degree in chemistry, along the way captaining the football team and studying briefly at Stanford University. Wood's California hiatus was due to a suspension from school caused by an overenthusiastic chemistry experiment which went awry. After briefly serving as an assistant state chemist in 1907, Wood applied for admission to West Point, chiefly because his roommate at Arkansas had been accepted and had convinced him that he could continue his college football playing.⁵ He was accepted into the Class of 1912 and although he was nearly sent back home due to myopia, his football

reputation caused the examining surgeon to ignore this physical deficiency since even in those days "West Point needed a good quarterback."⁶

Described as a "raunchy" cadet who was older and more "blasé" than his contemporaries, Wood eventually became "part and parcel ... heart and spirit of the Long Gray Line."⁷ Academics were no challenge to Wood and he was often called upon to tutor his less gifted classmates, leading to his lifelong nickname of "P" (for Professor) Wood.⁸ The 1912 Howitzer characterizes him as a "savant, linguist, seeker after knowledge ... athlete, singer [and] hail fellow-well-met," and sums up his impact on his fellow cadets by recording, "Contact with our P. will make you, as does he, find life worth living."⁹ Wood graduated twelfth in his class and was commissioned in the Coast Artillery. He returned to West Point three times over his years of service: as an assistant football coach later in 1912; chemistry instructor in 1916; and Deputy Commandant of Cadets in 1931.¹⁰

Transferring to the Ordnance Corps in order to get an overseas assignment, Wood accompanied the 3rd Infantry Division to France in 1918 as a major and division staff ordnance officer. He attended the Staff College at Langres, France, along with George Patton and William H. Simpson then transferred to the 90th Division, serving as a staff officer during St. Mihiel. Immediately prior to the Armistice, Wood was posted back to San Antonio to help prepare a new division for the expected Allied offensives in 1919, made unnecessary by the rapid German collapse that November.¹¹

Wood's experiences and service between the wars was not

appreciably different than his contemporaries. In addition to the assignments at West Point mentioned previously, he commanded a field artillery battery (after branch transferring soon after World War I), attended the General Staff College and the French Ecole Superieur de Guerre (although he turned down the Army War College in favor of troop duty), and served an extended span of ROTC duty - 10 years (split between Culver Military Academy and the University of Wisconsin). Throughout this period, Wood was especially active in studying and thinking about his profession. He read widely in military history and was "always writing ... letters about the use of artillery," or arguing tactics with friends like George Patton.¹² Wood "continued to develop ... and to evolve through study and reflection the professional ideas and command methods he later employed in battle."¹³ He was "never willing to relapse into static though" and his thoughts "were not ideas forged in a vacuum; [but] burgeoned from long study."¹⁴ Wood pored over the works of Liddell Hart, J.F.C. Fuller and Charles de Gaulle until, in the early 1930's, he "became an early convert to the belief that 'the next war would be one of rapid movement, of motors, tanks and aviation, of indirect approach and deep penetrations, regardless of flank protection and linear formations.'"¹⁵

Wood became the commander of the Army's only truck drawn howitzer regiment in 1936 when he assumed command of the 80th Field Artillery Regiment, Motorized, at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. This unique opportunity allowed him to "try out the ideas of mobility, movement and fire power he had read about and discussed," and Wood did so, "travelling thousands of miles across the country to

different firing points."¹⁶ He continued to use every sounding board he could to promote his views on weapons and tactics including reports to the Chief of Field Artillery, recommendations to the Caliber Board as well as several articles in the Field Artillery Journal.¹⁷

In September 1939, Lieutenant Colonel Wood was assigned as Third Army Chief of Staff at Atlanta and remained there until 1941 when he was promoted to Colonel and appointed Patton's 2nd Armored Division Artillery commander at Fort Benning. Wood was soon transferred to the new First Armored Corps as its Chief of Staff later in 1941, and in October of that year he was promoted to Brigadier General and subsequently assigned to command Combat Command "A" of the 5th Armored Division in California. In June, 1942, General Wood was given his second star and united with the unit which would thereafter bear his mark when he assumed command of the newly activated 4th Armored Division at Pine Camp, New York.¹⁸

General Wood and the 4th Armored Division: 1942-1944

Few commanders in history have been as successful as General Wood in imparting their spirit, ideas and essence upon their units as he did with the 4th Armored Division. From the moment he assumed command, Wood exerted an immediate and profound impact upon this unit which remained with it throughout the months of hard training and intense combat. "As soon as he assumed command, Wood immediately gave the division his own restless pride, his high standards, his aggressiveness, and his sense of innovation."¹⁹

Under Wood the 4th Armored Division trained long and hard from the snows of Pine Camp, New York, to the blistering Mojave

Desert of the Desert Training Center and "experimented, trained, and drilled exhaustively, particularly with small unit tactics, throughout 1942 and 1943."²⁰ As important as this developing tactical and technical expertise was the bond being formed between leader and unit, the result of Wood's loyalty, warmth and genuine concern for his soldiers. Nothing illustrates this bond better than the confrontation between Wood and the 2nd Army commander during the Tennessee Army Maneuvers in 1942, Lieutenant General Ben Lear. A flinty disciplinarian who "lived by the book, [and] ruled by fear", Lear was famous and feared Army-wide for his rigid, inflexible views and for browbeating his subordinates.²¹ Dissatisfied with the 4th Armored Division's unorthodox tactics, Lear berated and chastised the assembled officers of the unit for the "impractical tactics, poor judgment [and for being] undisciplined rabble".²² Wood stood it as long as he could then "charged onto the platform", interrupted Lear in mid-epithet and proceeded to tell Lear in no uncertain terms "that he did not know what he was talking about either as to the employment of Armor or the quality of the people of his division."²³ Coaxed off the stage after several minutes by Colonel Bruce Clarke, then division Chief of Staff, Lear followed Wood outside where the argument finally ended with Lear's departure. The story quickly became a division legend and tended to overshadow the unit's excellent, innovative tactical performance during the maneuvers:

... this successful development of the Armored tactics of firepower, shock and mobility probably made less of an impression on the 4th Armored Division than did General Wood's fiery public defense of his division from General Lear.²⁴

Although this incident highlights Wood's impatience with seniors whom he feels do not appreciate or understand his own ideas or point of view, its major effect was to cement the great bond of loyalty and devotion between himself and his division.

Wood and the 4th Armored Division were shipped to England in December 1943 and continued to train and prepare for their impending introduction to combat in France. That day came at D plus 36 when the division was assigned to General Middleton's VIII Corps in the Cotentin Peninsula.²⁵ For the week prior to the COBRA breakthrough, Middleton had the 4th Armored Division hold a static section of the defensive line on the Carentan-Periers isthmus. Although this static use of armor raised some eyebrows among the armor experts, Middleton (and Bradley) felt it gave the division just enough seasoning and confidence to enable it to perform excellently in its initial offensive combat on 28-29 July.²⁶ Counting his casualties during this week of "bleeding", Wood disagreed, remarking that "my people would do whatever they had to do without the need of any blood-bath. I knew my division, and its soldiers never failed me, although our infantry casualties in that dismal hedgerow combat were numerous and painful."²⁷ Whether this initiation to combat helped or not, the fact remains that the 4th Armored Division performed brilliantly in its first offensive role.

On 27 July, Patton [serving briefly as Deputy Army Commander to Bradley prior to official activation of his Third Army on 1 August] and Middleton decided to put Wood's 4th Armored Division in the lead of VIII Corps to drive south to Monthuchon, coordinate with VII Corps concerning his advance through Coutances

and prepare to continue "barrelling further southward."²⁸ The advance was spectacular:

On his [Collins, VII Corps] right flank, Middleton's VIII Corps, after a wobbly start, likewise broke through and Middleton cut loose his armor: the 4th Division under John S. Wood, and the 6th Division under Robert W. Grow. The armor smashed through thirty-five miles to our long-sought goal, Avranches, at the base of the peninsula. The Germans, now completely routed, retreated in haste or surrendered.²⁹

This type of warfare was more to Wood's liking, and he began to drive his armored columns forward as fast and furiously as the road network and his superiors would permit. His years of study and thought about the potential of mobile warfare began to pay dividends as he correctly perceived the conditions to be perfect for the kind of driving, sweeping movements for which his division was by organization, training and temperament so aptly suited. By 1 August, Wood's spearheads had raced through Pontaubault and drove on thirty more kilometers, almost to Rennes:³⁰

Wood wanted to turn east, both to keep his division where he believed the biggest action would be, and in quest of strategic opportunity for the whole Allied cause ... he proposed to General Middleton ... that the [following] 8th Division ... should take up the time-consuming task of capturing Rennes. The 4th Armored should bypass the city around a wide arc ... turn southeast to Chateaubriant [and drive eastward along] the road to Angers ... the 4th Armored would isolate Rennes on three sides until the followup infantry captured it [but could still] block enemy traffic to and from the Brittany Peninsula. Wood let the merits of the eastward threat speak for themselves. Anticipating approval, he ordered his division to begin the movement.³¹

At VIII Corps headquarters, General Middleton received Wood's reports which clearly indicated that he was orienting his division for an eastward drive against the main German forces rather than follow the plan to move westward into the Brittany Peninsula. But

Wood was not ordered to change his dispositions, demonstrating an apparent acceptance of these activities by Middleton. This did not mean, however, that Middleton had chosen to ignore his Army commander's instructions concerning Brittany, for on 3 August:

... Middleton's concern for his corps' responsibility westward into Brittany led him to add another cautionary exception to his apparent acceptance of Wood's activities. Wood was to leave adequate blocking forces at the bridges of the Vannes River ... These blocking forces would help assure the sealing off of Brittany, for the American higher command to choose to do with the peninsula whatever it wished.³²

What the American higher command (in this case, Third Army) wished to do with the Brittany Peninsula turned out to be exactly what it had previously instructed VIII Corps to do - drive the bulk of the corps westward into the peninsula and capture the ports in accordance with OVERLORD plans. Third Army Chief of Staff, General Hugh Gaffey, removed any lingering doubt in Middleton's and Wood's minds about their Brittany mission on 5 August:

Wood and Middleton were soon to receive further confirmation that their seniors had not changed the OVERLORD design ... Gaffey promptly told Middleton that General Patton "assumes ... you are pushing the bulk of the [4th Armored] division to the west and southwest to the Quiberon area ... in accordance with the Army plan." Gaffey also got off a direct message to Wood, with a copy to Middleton, explicitly sending the 4th Armored to Vannes and Lorient, westward into Brittany.³³

Wood, who had been exercising "wide latitude in interpreting and executing his assignment [due to the] fluid situation and precarious communication emphasizing the need for initiative at the division level",³⁴ was unwilling to bend orders from his Army commander, even though he complained to Middleton that "we're winning this war the wrong way, we ought to be going toward Paris."³⁵ Wood

reluctantly turned his division west to Lorient and what he felt was a "dead end", thinking that:

[If] the 4th Armored Division [was] in position to drive eastward rather than westward, the division would be able to make a more vital contribution to victory. Instead of being relegated to a subsidiary role in Brittany, which might become the backwash of the war, the division would join the main Allied force for the kill. The proper direction, General Wood believed, was eastward to Chartres.³⁶

Wood found the defenses at Lorient too strong to quickly storm and notified his corps commander that he could only contain the port city until other units were brought up to assist in its capture. What he wanted to do was to leave a weak but sufficient containing force at Lorient while he turned the bulk of his division loose on a rampage to the east. Neither Patton nor Middleton were prepared to accept this action and on 7 August, Middleton wrote Wood:

"Dear John", Middleton informed Wood in a letter he signed "Troy", "George was here this p.m. and made the following decision: when you take your objective, remain in that vicinity and await orders." If Wood could not take Lorient without help, Middleton continued, he was to hold in place until a decision could be made on the amount of assistance he was to get. The reason, Middleton explained, was the obscurity that surrounded the developments not only in Brittany but on the larger front. It was possible that the American force driving toward Brest might also need help, and Patton did not want troops moved both east and west at the same time until the situation became clearer.³⁷

Wood was told he must wait until the more important objectives of Brest and St. Malo had been secured before he could expect any help from the remainder of VIII Corps.³⁸ This forced inaction was anathema to Wood and, in a letter to Liddell Hart, he railed against the seeming conservatism and lack of imagination on the part of

senior Allied planners that the Brittany decision epitomized:

When it [the American Command] did react, its order consisted of sending its two flank armored divisions back, 180 degrees away from the main enemy, to engage in siege operations ... August 4 was that black day. I protested long, loud and violently - and pushed my tank columns into Chateaubriant (without orders) ... ready to advance (east) on Chartres. I could have been there, in the enemy vitals, in two days. But no! We were forced to adhere to the original plan - with the only armor available, and ready to cut the enemy to pieces. It was one of the colossally stupid decisions of the war.³⁹

Wood and his division could not be restrained indefinitely, however, and an opportunity to race east soon presented itself. When told by Middleton to send some forces east to Nantes to relieve another VIII Corps unit there, Wood used this excuse to move the bulk of his division there, leaving only a screen in front of Lorient.⁴⁰ Once Wood had his foot stuck in the door to the east, Patton and Middleton acquiesced, sending the 6th Armored Division from Brest to Lorient to relieve the remainder of 4th Armored Division units. "General Wood had finally gotten a mission he wanted. The 4th Armored Division was driving eastward."⁴¹ As an official Army study explains:

Thus, the way was opened for the 4th Armored Division, led by Combat Command A, to break clear of organized German resistance and embark on an exploitative advance unequalled in history. In but a month, the 4th Armored Division swept over 1,000 miles before grinding to a halt on the banks of the Moselle River ... One can only speculate how much farther the division may have gone toward the German Fatherland had not the American supply lines collapsed from strain and overextension.⁴²

The division's legendary drive across France was stunning testament to the theories of the proponents of mobile warfare and assured Wood's reputation as the premier American armored division

commander of the war. Moving faster and farther than any unit before it in its "dash across France, the 4th Armored won a considerable reputation and endeared itself to the heart of the Third Army commander."⁴³ Indeed, it must have been close to Patton's heart for not only was Wood a much-respected personal friend, but it was largely upon the 4th Armored Division's lightning dash that Patton's later reputation as a brilliant World War II armored commander rested. The sweep across France had been spectacularly successful, but the offensive sputtered out all along the front as the fragile, over-loaded supply system broke down at the end of August 1944. This lull in the constant forward drive gave the division a chance to rest tired men and repair worn equipment before the campaign to recapture Lorraine began in early September.

The 4th Armored Division received its chance to continue the eastward push when, as part of XII Corps, it was readied to cross the Moselle and attempt the envelopment of the German forces at Nancy:

... CCA, 4th Armored Division ... lay in the rear areas of the XII Corps awaiting gasoline and further orders. The commander and staff of the 4th Armored Division were extremely anxious to continue the highly mobile operations that had characterized the work of the division in Brittany and across France, and they produced a new attack plan almost daily, most of which turned on the idea of a deep thrust by the entire 4th Armored north and east of Nancy. When the corps commander decided to execute a double envelopment, General Wood gave Colonel Clarke permission to choose his own crossing site on the north wing of the corps.⁴⁴

With Lieutenant Colonel Creighton Abrams' tank battalion leading the way, Clarke pushed across the Moselle on his way to attack southward and envelop Nancy from the north, while a second task force which included CCB, 4th Armored Division, attacked from

the west.⁴⁵ The results were reminiscent of the earlier successes of the great drive across France:

[The 4th Armored Division's action at Nancy was] one of the finest armored actions of the war. Combat Command A crossed the river, crashed through the German counterattacking forces, drove the Germans from the high ground at Ste. Genevieve, and advanced rapidly to the east ... On 14 September, Combat Command A drove south and by nightfall contacted Combat Command B on the Rhine - Marne canal. The juncture of the two armored columns closed the pincers on Nancy.⁴⁶

Surviving determined German counterattacks, the division learned valuable lessons while gaining more combat experience enveloping Nancy and engaging in the subsequent tank battles around Arracourt:

Through the earlier battles in Normandy and Brittany the division had developed a high degree of coordination among the various arms ... Equally important, the division had learned much of the capabilities and limitations of the M-4 tank and its short barreled 75mm gun, with which most of the medium tank companies were equipped. Maneuver had been the major tactic in Lorraine, with various types of the "mouse trap play" and surprise attacks from hull defilade, or under cover of the fogs rising from the Moselle and Seille bottoms, against German tanks whose high velocity guns generally outranged the American tank weapons but whose turrets - traversed by hand - turned so slowly that four or five rounds could be fired into a Panther before its own gun could be brought to bear.⁴⁷

The September operations of the 4th Armored Division were extremely successful "even if the division had never been free to make the dash to the Rhine which its personnel, officers and men alike, had wished."⁴⁸ Wood and his division were thoroughly battle-wise and highly confident of their well demonstrated combat abilities as the unit prepared to engage in the November campaign in Lorraine.⁴⁹ However, stiffening German resistance and miserable weather combined

to produce the toughest fighting the division would face during the entire war. This unfortunate mixture of terrain and weather:

... promised very bad tank going and ... would inevitably restrict the mobility that had distinguished American armored formations in preceding months. During the final phase of the November operation the 4th Armored Division would be handicapped also by the fact that the right boundary of the Third Army continually was subject to change, making it necessary for the division constantly to alter its axis of advance in order to stay within the proper zone, and even, on occasion, to double back on its tracks.⁵⁰

Although the November campaign provided the division with its first opportunity since early October to "operate as a unit in a coordinated attack against the enemy",⁵¹ the action's peculiarities forced the division "into a bitter series of fire fights on all sides ... a slugfest."⁵² The division, along with its dynamic commander "met problems during this operation that it had heretofore not encountered in its advance across France or during training in the United States and the United Kingdom."⁵³ Wood, physically exhausted by the previous five months' of combat, grew increasingly pessimistic and depressed by the damnable weather and a constant flow of casualties as "his people" were brought in broken, bleeding and shattered. This was not the kind of war at which he excelled and his frayed nerves were unable to prevent his temper from boiling over with increasing frequency. Finally, he gave his corps commander, General Manton Eddy, no choice but to ask Patton for permission to relieve him. Reluctantly but rightfully, Patton agreed that his good friend must be sent home for a rest:

On December 3, Major General Hugh J. Gaffey, Third Army Chief of Staff, succeeded General Wood as commander of the Fourth Armored. General Wood, in command of the division since 18 June 1942, had led it from Pine Camp, New

York, to the Sarre Valey of Alsace-Lorraine. The spirit with which he endowed the Fourth Armored to make it a unique fighting family remained with the division after the general returned to the United States.⁵⁴

The division would continue its outstanding achievements until the end of the war, but it would do so without its spiritual father.

Analysis of General Wood's Personal Leadership

Characterized as dynamic, demanding, ingenious, innovative and dashing yet tempered by qualities of compassion, humility and a fierce loyalty to subordinates,⁵⁵ General Wood's personal leadership style was his single most outstanding feature but it also made him at times "a bit obstreperous"⁵⁶ to seniors with whom he dissented. Wood's biographer, Hanson Baldwin, described the essence of his style when he wrote:

[Wood] was in many ways a military iconoclast, with ideas of his own and the moral courage to express them. But they were not ideas forged in a vacuum; they burgeoned from long study. He was a natural leader, born and bred, outstanding in any company, physically strong, with enormous vitality and energy, and a physical and mental restlessness which could be slacked only by vigorous bodily activity, sports of all types and by study or discussion.⁵⁷

Wood's tremendous leadership strengths, which made his personal leadership so marvelously effective with his division, also contained the seeds of his future difficulties with his superior. His aggressive dynamism gave him little tolerance and not much patience for "men of lesser minds or small characters"; he could dissent vigorously if he felt his unit unjustly used; and "when he was convinced injustice or ... foolishness was in control ... he thundered and the heavens listened."⁵⁸ Wood's personal

leadership, however, was not all purely emotional or created only by deep inner feelings, but was also a product of his intellect.

Wood wrote that:

... military leadership generally requires a sound basis of military education supplemented by years of study and reflection

While no particular event or personality or association may be singled out in the formation of an officer's character, the sum total of all such things influences and guides his performance in war.⁵⁹

General Wood recorded his views on the "Characteristics of Combat Leadership", which gave further insight into his personal leadership style:

1. Disregard of fear (passes for bravery).
2. Constant endeavor to spare men unnecessary hardship and useless losses.
3. Willingness to share hardships and face the same dangers as the troops.
4. Quality of sympathy and understanding that inspires confidence and trust and a willing effort and initiative among troops.⁶⁰

It is clear that Wood consistently practiced all these characteristics and his own personal leadership was marked by each of them. As true to his own values and beliefs as he was to his unit, Wood rigidly adhered to these characteristics, sometimes to his detriment. A more prudent man, for instance, might have discovered the long term harmfulness of a 56 year old man constantly sharing all the hardships of his much younger soldiers. Vowing to remain under canvas as long as his men must do likewise, Wood steadfastly refused to live in a comfortable, dry, warm trailer given to him by General Tooev Spatz.⁶¹ While admirable in its motives, this refusal to take proper care of himself had to have

contributed to his physically exhausted state of late November.

Wood's style of leading his division was aggressive and caused him to continually "lead from the front". He put his troops on notice early that the 4th Armored Division would "attack and attack, and if an order is ever given to fall back, the order will not come from me."⁶² He was usually found close to the heads of his advancing columns and was seldom content to sit at his headquarters waiting for news of the fight. At Coutances, in July 1944, Wood:

... clad immaculately, as always, in polished boots, riding pants, a trim jacket and sun glasses, which he wears rain or shine ... marched into the town on foot, under fire, captured a German soldier ... found a path through the minefields, picked his way through town on foot, sending back a message for his troops to follow him.⁶³

Although Wood liked to be in the thick of the fight, he was not there to garner personal publicity or gather a chestfull of decorations. He sought out the action because he genuinely believed that, as the division commander, it was his duty to be there:

... Wood was not driven by a thirst for personal glory; rather, his motivation was a proprietary pride in the soldiers he led. Wood was a commanding figure, but he played command in low key. He did not use the accoutrements of command, the trade marks of pearl-handled revolvers, or strapped on grenades, or purple language and roaring expletives. He was a distinctive figure but again in low key - polished boots, riding breeches, sun glasses, and visored cap - but his presence needed little sartorial support or professional "props"; it was, naturally, a commanding one.⁶⁴

Wood avoided ceremony, especially if it featured him as the central figure. In October 1944, he refused to allow a presentation ceremony when he was awarded the Air Medal by his corps commander

and was visibly embarrassed earlier when Patton insisted on giving him a bronze star.⁶⁵ In matters of discipline, however, he was a "stickler for high standards ... but ... not a martinet."⁶⁶ Wood did not believe in spit and polish simply for their own sake, but he set and enforced high standards in training and combat.

Impatient when the fortunes of war were not smiling upon him, Wood could become easily disappointed and frustrated when he perceived a rare opportunity to strike the enemy was being lost by unsympathetic superiors or an overextended supply system. Angry and frustrated at being sent to Lorient instead of being allowed to drive eastward against the bulk of the German army, Wood in early August 1944 was:

Terribly disappointed ... [at] ... "being left pretty far out on this limb." Still later he grumbled, "Can achieve impossible but not yet up to miracles. Boche does not intend to fold up." He radioed his belief that at least one infantry division supported by corps artillery, additional air power, and naval forces would be required to reduce Lorient. Finally, "my division requires overhaul for further operations at similar speeds," he radioed. "Request decision. Repeat, request decision."⁶⁷

The urgent necessity for overhaul of his division was immediately forgotten a few days later when the 4th Armored Division was finally launched on its magnificent race eastward across France, at speeds, it may be noted, in excess of those which demanded overhaul only days earlier. This impatience and frustration would have a serious effect on his performance in November.

Of all the characteristics and traits which formed Wood's personal leadership, however, the single most evident one was his loyalty. Baldwin writes that "The personal bond between General Wood and the men he commanded was compounded of many things - most

of all loyalty down and human warmth."⁶⁸ This "fierce but simple loyalty"⁶⁹ manifested itself in all facets of Wood's relationship with his unit, even causing him to carry "officers along who were incompetent because they were 'his boys'."⁷⁰ Baldwin explains his loyalty as:

... Wood's outstanding characteristic as a leader. Any good combat officer must become emotionally concerned with his men or he is not a good officer. On the other hand, if he becomes too concerned - particularly in heavy combat when casualties are certain to be sizeable - he will either crack or his battlefield judgment will become erratic. Wood was concerned with his men; he had a burning loyalty to the 4th Armored Division and all who were of it, and a fierce, intense, and protective pride in his officers and men. He cared for his men and took care of them.⁷¹

But while this loyalty was Wood's tremendous strength it was also his major failing. Convinced that "the keys to leading men in battle were ... warmth, understanding, sympathy, compassion ... the intangible essence of human comprehension that emanated from Lee,"⁷² it was Wood's belligerently pursued, all-consuming concern for his division's mounting casualties, to the detriment of the unit's mission, which was a major factor in his relief from command. General Wood "was not an easy subordinate. He was a highly intelligent and perceptive man who did not 'suffer fools gladly' no matter what their station. He was, in fact, openly contemptuous of men he considered to be of lesser competence."⁷³ While this concern and these tendencies made him seem to his superiors only "rambunctious" during the successful drive from Normandy, through Brittany and across France, they combined with his physical exhaustion to make Wood "difficult and obstinate" in the mud and blood of Lorraine. His conviction that the unique

abilities of his superb division were being tragically wasted in this difficult fighting heightened Wood's frustration and was still evident some years after the war in a forward he wrote for an Armor School study of the operation:

Aggressive warfare requires constant pressure on the enemy. Commanders must at times demand operations under the most unfavorable circumstances of terrain and weather, and with little regard to the characteristics of the forces at hand. This is unfortunate but it is war.

Such were the operations of the Fourth Armored Division in the Sarre-Moselle area in the winter of 1944. They show what courage and determination can accomplish in an extremely difficult situation. Beyond that they furnish only a classical example of the manner in which armored divisions should never be employed, if avoidable. It is hoped that better balancing of forces and better conceptions of battle will prevent any such use of armor in the future.⁷⁴

General Wood's immediate superior during this campaign and the man who would eventually demand his relief was XII Corps Commander, Major General Manton S. Eddy, a florid, hearty veteran of Pershing's AEF who had been a division commander of "conspicuous boldness and skill" prior to his elevation to corps command.⁷⁵ Eddy and Wood were similar in that each demanded and ensured a smoothly functioning headquarters which allowed both men "to be almost always in the center of the action, where the most critical decisions had to be made most quickly," but Wood's spartan, rigorous sharing of his troops' hardships contrasted sharply with Eddy "who always kept a comfortable headquarters, an excellent chef and an elegant table."⁷⁶ A clash of these two different styles was almost inevitable:

... it was no secret in the 4th Armored Division that Wood and Major General Manton S. Eddy, commanding the XII Corps, were, at times, uneasy bedfellows. Both

of them were superior generals, but in quite different ways. Wood was volatile, impatient, never a "yes man"; not a submissive subordinate.

On the Army list Wood was senior to most commanders in Europe, and he had been both critical and correct - two attributes which did not win friends or influence people.⁷⁷

The catalyst in this situation was Wood's exhausted physical and emotional state. "By 1 December Wood, like his division, was tired, irritable, emotional, tense and frustrated by what he considered unnecessary bloodshed caused by the stupidity of higher-ups."⁷⁸ Wood was emotionally drained by the heavy casualties caused by terrain and weather restrictions and was a tired man by the end of November.⁷⁹ Wood was paying the price for his driving, dynamic leadership style, as the stimulating experience of operating deep in enemy territory, capturing thousands of prisoners,⁸⁰ had been replaced by a depressing, uninspired slugfest in the mud of Lorraine. Eddy's diary chronicles the deteriorating relationship between the corps commander and his increasingly difficult division commander:

12 September 1944 - At 1015 I was in the car ready to leave for the 80th CP, but P. Wood arrived. He was on his way to see CCB and ... was, as usual, in the finest of optimistic spirits.

16 September 1944 - P. Wood and Paul Baade [35th Division Commander] are damn good soldiers. Although they rank me by about 5 years in the Army they are really cooperative ... Wood [is] the positive, blunt driving type ...

19 September 1944 - General Patton arrived [and] ... seemed rather pleased at the way things were going. Said he gave P. Wood a little hell about being slow. I told him that I thought P. was done an injustice as I considered him one of the fastest moving armored commanders he had.

28 September 1944 - I truly envy Joe Collins [VII Corps Commander] and wish that I had units of my corps equally as reliant as are his. Our people are so slow to react against any enemy move; it sometimes alarms me greatly. At times I feel that I am not only the Corps Commander, but the commander of certain units of the corps as well.

2 October 1944 - [P. Wood] was in when I arrived and was in a good mood - nothing was troubling him much. Of course he would still like to be able to pull his infantry and tanks out of the line for a rest, and I would like for him to do it, but will have to wait until we can get a regiment of the 26th division into his sector ... The XV Corps wants P. to push up and tie his flank on to the lake ... but this is no job for armor as the ground in the vicinity of the river and canal is very marshy.

3 October 1944 - In the afternoon I flew to the 4th Armored CP and gave the new plan to P. Wood. I also talked to him in regard to an apparent fault of his which is worrying too much about the troops that are in the line. I know how this is, because in the past, I have let this type of thing almost run away with me a great many times.

12 October 1944 - Had General Patton and Hugh Gaffey in for dinner and afterwards we had a couple of drinks ... We discussed many subjects as to Army policy, particularly those of promotions, citations and relief of officers.

18 October 1944 - the same old cry came up from P. - "How much infantry are you going to give me?" I told him I wasn't going to give him any and he stated that it takes infantry to fight wars. I asked him how he expected the infantry to fight if there wasn't any infantry left. He said he didn't see how they could and the subject was dropped.

9 November 1944 - P. Wood was there. He said that many of his vehicles were on the road through Jeandelincourt and he seemed very much disgusted with the whole situation. Terrain conditions would not let him get his vehicles off the roads to maneuver. He claims that his division was attacking on a "one tank" front. I have learned to know P. very well in the last few months and when he doesn't like something he paints a very black picture indeed.

18 November 1944 - Over the phone, early this morning, P. had blown off a little steam when I told him how I wanted his columns set. He said that I ran his division, however, I pointed out to him that the places he sent his columns through had a great deal to do with the corps picture.

I talked to him for quite a while after lunch and we got things straightened out.

19 November 1944 - Called Hugh [Gaffey] early this morning and told him I would like to see General Patton about a personal matter which I was sure he would be interested in ... I conferred with him for about a half hour. I told him that P. Wood and I would have to have an understanding. Yesterday morning I told P. to put an armored force ahead of the 26th Division to take Dieuze and about noon I told him to send an armored force around to the south ... Yesterday evening I found that neither had been done ... Either P. is going to have to take his commands from the Corps or I am going to have to be allowed to get someone who will take and execute the orders I give him. P. is an old friend of General Patton's so the General said he would write P. a letter and get his personal guarantee that he would take and carry out my orders. Should this fail, he will relieve him ... I have seen this coming for quite some time. When I first took command of the corps everything was in favor of armored action. They gained much ground with very few loses, but as fall set in and the weather became bad, the ground softened up so that maneuvering for tanks was difficult. P. began receiving heavier losses than he had heretofore encountered. It has gotten so that at times he has been to the point of belligerency over the use of armor. Many, many times I have had to curb my own temper ... I am hoping that this will straighten out the difficulties involved ...

30 November 1944 - P. Wood was with Ham [Haislip, XV Corps Commander] when I arrived. I talked with Ham and Wood about the situation. It seemed that Ham had ordered the combat team he had put with Wood back under his own command and was ... provoked that P. had not attacked. A message from CCA of the 4th Armored said that they were not to attack today. Wood said that they were so he left to go to CCA to get this straightened out ... Ham said that as far as he was concerned Wood had just come down into his area and had taken up road space as so far he had not done any fighting at all. He said that he had coordinated with him on the roads on P's first visit and that for the next two days Wood had been saying he was getting clearances on the roads. When he finally did move, it was into an assembly area ... Wood was there [4th Armored CP] when I arrived. It seems that CCA was not going to attack, however, he finally got them started and assured me that they would be on their way that afternoon ... After dinner I called General Patton and very urgently recommended that P. Wood be relieved.

1 December 1944 - Wood ... reported that elements of the 26th Division were in Saarunion, but I strongly doubted this ... I called Williard of the 26th and found that they

were still advancing, but slowly. Elements ... of the 101st Infantry were coming into Saarunion and had been making good progress until the 4th Armored had received a counterattack. It is coming to the point now where I can't tell if these so-called counterattacks are combat patrols, reconnaissance in force or really a counterattack ... Wood called later in the evening and offered any number of excuses as to why he could not keep moving and wanted me to say for him to stop. This cannot be done, he must push forward.

2 December 1944 - Left early for the 4th Armored CP at Fenetrange and had a long talk with Wood in private in his office ... Found that P. had received his [relief] orders today.⁸¹

On 3 December 1944, Wood turned over command of his division to Major General Hugh J. Gaffey, formerly Patton's Third Army Chief of Staff, and returned to the U.S., officially on "sixty days detached service ... for rest and recuperation."⁸² Inevitably, controversy and suspicion would rise up concerning the circumstances surrounding the relief of a commander who "was so evidently one of the best of the division commanders - perhaps the very best."⁸³ Wood, himself, always rejected the physical exhaustion reason and reflected on the ultimate wisdom of "the withdrawal from combat of a division commander who was acknowledged to have achieved outstanding and unprecedented success in the employment of armor."⁸⁴ But the fact remains that Wood was depressed and exhausted, the result of his energetic style of personal leadership combined with the rigorous demands of division command in combat. Eisenhower recognized that such division command was the war's supreme challenge to professional stature and physical stamina,⁸⁵ and was motivated by this fact when he began sending officers like Wood home for much needed rest and recuperation. Shortly after he sent Wood to the U.S., he wrote that:

... the abnormal strains always borne by an active division commander, are really more than any one man should be called upon to bear. But with anything like a recovery to their usual spirits and vigor, I hope to get all these men back ... because each is an outstanding leader. Corps, Army and Army Group Commanders stand up well. They are in the more fortunate middle area where their problems involve tactics and local maintenance, without on the one hand having to burden themselves with politics, priorities, shipping and Maquis, while they are spared the more direct battle strains of a Division Commander.⁸⁶

General Wood's farewell to combat did not mean that he was a failure as a leader. On the contrary, it was his spectacular success as a leader, his tremendous energy and vitality, the restless, daring brilliance of his campaigns in the summer of 1944 that eventually wore him down and ultimately formed the foundation for his inevitable relief. Perhaps a less volatile commander would have survived longer in command than did Wood, but it is also as likely that a division commander who was not as driving, dynamic or aggressive as Wood would not have achieved the same outstanding successes from Brittany to Lorraine. "Successful combat leadership is easily recognized in effective combat performance."⁸⁷ Wood's units' effective performance was obviously enhanced by the leadership qualities of its commander. For Wood, these qualities included loyalty, enthusiasm, humility and understanding and proved to be key ingredients in his success as an effective combat leader.

Analysis of General Wood's Technical Competence

General Wood's technical competence as an armored division commander was dramatically and unassailably established on the battlefields of France during the brilliant campaigns from the

Cotentin Peninsula to the banks of the Moselle River. His concepts and ideas concerning the art of mobile warfare and the utilization of mechanized task forces, developed over many years of study and application between the world wars, were combat tested and proven sound in the crucible of battle. The 4th Armored division had been thoroughly indoctrinated with Wood's ideas and he had personally trained that unit for two long years to prepare it for its introduction to combat. Wood's ideas and training indelibly marked the unit:

He had a general overview of the combat arms and the services and how each meshed with the other that was rather rare in the Army of his day ... he knew his army and what produced combat results. For some of the trivia of military life he had little use, but he was a bear on training, insistent on detail, persistent in the pursuit of perfection. Wood's training plan was keyed to this end: the development of sound combat habits, and to flexibility, rapidity, and initiative. He tolerated mistakes and corrected them - but not the same mistake twice. In the 4th Armored, performance was required, results expected.⁸⁸

General Wood began forming his ideas on a more fluid form of warfare as a result of his early experiences in World War I. As a division staff officer he was not actually engaged in combat but he was in a position to observe the terrible effects of trench warfare on the men of his unit. His active and inquiring mind seized on these observations and began to contemplate alternatives:

Professionally, Wood's service in World War I contributed materially to his education in the mobile concepts in which he was later to excel. He saw, in France, the trench stalemate and the triumph of the machine gun, which had hobbled movement and had forced a static, linear conflict. He saw, too, the advent of the tank and the development of the plane, and his eager mind read and absorbed the thoughts of many military writers, impatient with static warfare and static ideas. He commenced to seek and search for a better way to win wars than by "chewing on barbed wire in Flanders" to paraphrase Winston Churchill.⁸⁹

Between the world wars, Wood attended the usual Army schools including the General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth and was chosen to attend the French Ecole Superieur de Guerre which he graduated from in 1931, but invariably he "sought troop command ... [and] ... avoided staff duty and Washington like the plague."⁹⁰ He turned down an assignment to the Army War College to accept a troop command and preferred to develop his military principles and technical competence through fieldwork in a unit or through extensive self-study.⁹¹ Wood recalled:

I studied military lore deeply and extensively after leaving West Point, reading of campaigns and captains in hundreds of tomes and in the five languages which I am able to understand [French, German, Spanish, Russian and English]. But of all that, no simple word or thought moved me unless it conformed to my own instinct and understanding, and no military leader except Robert E. Lee even seemed to me worthy of my whole-hearted admiration and emulation.

Those were ... years in which there was time for study and quiet reflection on the nature of war and the shape of wars to come. George Patton ... possessed a splendid library of military works, and we read everything from the maxims of Sun Tzu and Confucius to the latest articles in our own and foreign military publications.⁹²

Wood's self-study was facilitated by his excellent mind which allowed him to quickly grasp concepts and retain much of what he studied.⁹³ These outstanding mental capabilities "contributed materially to his success as a leader "and enabled him to grasp the "immense tactical and strategic potentialities of armor and airplane long before younger and presumably more adaptable - men understood them."⁹⁴ His extended service as an ROTC instructor (10 years) provided ample opportunity for this thought

and reflection, but also was valuable in "providing him with exposure to the citizen soldier and facilitating his understanding of the men who would form the raw material from which Wood molded his magnificent division."⁹⁵

Wood was able to clearly see that the next war would be one dominated by mobility and maneuver in which tanks, airplanes and motorization would be the keys to victory. In the early 1930's he had predicted correctly that 105mm and 155mm artillery would become the standard calibers for divisional artillery and would relegate the once-supreme 75mm to service with airborne and mountain units where its light weight advantage could overcome the inferior throw-weight of its puny projectile.⁹⁶ Wood's experimentation with his truck drawn artillery unit in 1937 and his comprehensive training exercises with the 4th Armored Division prior to its overseas deployment were well validated on the battlefields of France and established Wood as "one of the few officers in the Allied armies whom Liddell Hart found alert to the possibilities offered by his own strategic theories of deep armored envelopment and the indirect approach."⁹⁷ Wood's biographer wrote of his use of armor and the effect this had on Allied campaigns in France which provides a good assessment of Wood's technical competence:

... in the summer of 1944 Wood and his division found themselves at the vortex of U.S. strategic plans; the decisions Wood made and helped to make and the things his division did influenced the course of the war in France ... Wood was probably one of the first to see [the opportunity to break free and race across France] and to appreciate its implications ... Wood's swift recognition of the changed situation after the breakout and his instinctive positioning of his division to drive to the east rather than get bogged down in street fighting against fortified citadels was the correct one; both General Patton and Lieutenant General

Troy Middleton, then Wood's Corps Commander, subsequently said so.⁹⁸

It would not be fair, however, or completely accurate to discuss Wood's technical competence without mentioning that his all-consuming preoccupation with mobile, armored warfare tended to cause him to fail to fully appreciate the restrictions and difficulties of employing infantry. Wood was stimulated and exhilarated by his speeding, slashing armored columns and was little inclined to consider the needs or indulge the wishes of the slow moving, plodding infantry units. He revealed this attitude when he impatiently and unrealistically demanded that an accompanying infantry regiment assault the city of Rennes on 3 August, well before it could do so with a reasonable probability of success⁹⁹ and Eddy pointed it out in his diary, writing that "P, being an armored man ... cannot see eye to eye [with the infantry] on many points ... [and] ... definitely doesn't understand the complex problems of infantry moving at a slow rate of speed."¹⁰⁰ Despite these shortcomings, however, Wood's genius as an armored battle commander leaves no doubt about his technical competence.

Analysis of General Wood's Organizational Leadership

Emphasizing innovation, initiative and team play, General Wood's organizational leadership focused on infusing every member of his division, not just the leaders, with the necessity for driving toward the common goal. Wood worked relentlessly to instill every soldier in "the division with his carefully considered techniques, aimed at gaining the victory with all the speed and firepower granted a technological Army."¹⁰¹ Wood explained

his thoughts on goal setting for his unit when he wrote that:

Many commanding officers make the mistake of fostering and encouraging competition among their units and even among individuals of their command. There is nothing worse! The only goal must be perfection - perfection in attaining the standards set by the commander, perfection in team play, perfection in concerted and combined action - and every man must be convinced that he is personally responsible for it.¹⁰²

This organizational focus on the individual soldier as the principal ingredient for success was typical of Wood's attitude and temperament and perfectly complemented his leadership style. "Wood's leadership - indeed his entire Army career - emphasized the role of man in battle. To him, his soldiers were human beings, not mere 'bodies', and he remained convinced until his death that man was the key to victory."¹⁰³

Wood had nearly two years to train, organize and focus his division on its goal before it faced its test in combat and he wasted none of that time. Whether in the snow of Pine Camp, New York, the forests of Tennessee or the desert of California, "Wood kept this level of training intense with physical conditioning and tank-to-tank rolling battles" which drilled "maneuver, speed and competence in the basics of the military art ... again and again and again."¹⁰⁴ Wood felt that, if his entire unit was "imbued with the offensive spirit ... from top to bottom,"¹⁰⁵ his subordinate commanders would always focus on the common goal while completely free to innovate and use their own initiative in all situations:

Wood allowed his commanders much initiative and encouraged innovation in training and in developing tactics ... Wood tried everything in the book - and

much that was not. Ideas were grist to his mill, and tactical dispositions, tank fire while moving, artillery concentrations ... reconnaissance, armored infantry tactics ... - all were practiced again and again until the units were letter perfect. Each senior officer came to know the other's voices over the telephone or radio; call signs and code names were unnecessary. There gradually grew up the intimacy of close association, of common striving for a common purpose, of friendship which, blended, makes for teamwork.¹⁰⁶

This habitually close association of leaders and men provided the division with the direction its commander intended. Wood was continually teaching and coaching his subordinates on all aspects of warfare and tactics, and "he constantly went over, with Dager [CCB, Commander], Clarke and others of his staff, his ideas. He drew maps to illustrate, outlining tactical plans in broad areas suitable for movement of army, corps and divisions. He shaded areas on the map emphasizing terrain most suitable for armored forces, infantry, artillery positions, enveloping tactics and road-nets facilitating movement and supply."¹⁰⁷ But most of all Wood indoctrinated his division with the spirit of mobility to outmaneuver the enemy wherever possible or to "use ... overwhelming fire power - infantry weapons, tank weapons and artillery -" to crush the enemy whenever necessary.¹⁰⁸ Wood recorded the overall organization and functioning of his division, capturing the dynamic flair of his organizational leadership and the remarkably fluid character of the unit:

Contrary to the practice in many other armored divisions, we had no separation into fixed or rigid combat commands. To me the division was a reservoir of force to be applied in different combinations as circumstances indicated, and ... changed as needed in the course of combat ... There is not time or place for detailed orders, limiting lines or zones, phase lines,

limited objectives or other restraints ... It must drive fast and hard in given directions in columns of all arms with the necessary supply, maintenance and supporting elements present in each column, ready for action to the front or ... flanks ... Each column was self-sustaining for prolonged action, and only the vital essential of fuel could limit or halt our action ... 109

When it entered combat, Wood's organization performed "like cavalry - slashing, side-slipping and pushing forward [and its] esprit de corps ... matched the supreme confidence of the division commander."¹¹⁰

Wood's biographer, Hanson Baldwin, accurately assessed the significance of Wood's tremendous impact on his unit and its subsequent effect on the campaigns in France when he described the importance of division command and the role of the division commander:

The role of division commander presents the supreme test of generalship. The division, the standard tactical unit of most armies, is normally the largest outfit upon which any single man can fully impress his personality and bestow his cachet of his leadership, and the smallest unit with the capability of sustained land combat. The division commander is either the basic architect of victory or the scapegoat of defeat, for the division is the buildingblock of ground war. What the division commander does, how his division performs, affects - and may, indeed, determine - the fate, not only of the division itself, but of the corps and the Army. ¹¹¹

General Wood had discovered that the most effective way of focusing his unit on the common goal was to thoroughly imbue his entire division with his own spirit and enthusiasm. Having done so through years of innovative and rigorous training, it was only necessary for him to indicate the direction of attack when combat was joined for his unit to react spectacularly. While this training program, which emphasized mobile warfare, did not

pay as high dividends in the more restrictive fighting in Lorraine, it worked exceptionally well during the pursuit across France. Even after he departed the unit "his leadership and influence was to be felt as long as the division remained active. Few leaders have been able to project their will and personality so completely upon their command as did this revered and beloved commander of the 4th Armored Division."¹¹²

Analysis of General Wood's Management

The battle management of these speeding columns emphasized techniques which followed naturally from General Wood's conception of fluid, mobile warfare. The speed of his division's operations and the great distances over which it operated demanded "simplicity in planning ... [and] ... oral rather than written instructions were emphasized."¹¹³ In ten days the division command post might change locations six times and Wood "commanded from a jeep or a Piper Cub flying over his forward elements. He gave oral orders and held tailgate conferences - not for him the formal briefings, the long written orders. His directives were always terse and simple; in effect, 'Go get 'em'."¹¹⁴

Wood believed that to properly control the action in the fast-moving, constantly changing, dynamic situation of mobile, armored warfare the commander must be well forward observing the action as it occurred. He wrote that "If you can't see it happen, it's too late to hear about it back in a rear area and meet it with proper force."¹¹⁵

Wood described his principles of managing fast-moving forces in battle in a letter to Liddell Hart. Among these principles he

listed: "[Issue] direct oral orders - no details, only missions; disregard ... old ideas of flank security ... [when] ... moving in depth; [stress] organization of supply (taking rations, gas and ammunition in rolling reserve); [insure] personal communication with commanders; and trust people in the rear to do their part."¹¹⁶ Wood issued his concept to the division staff for them to implement, then kept himself constantly on the move, sometimes seeming to attempt to be everywhere at once. Like his Army commander, Patton, Wood usually employed a light plane to maintain contact and control of his surging columns, and he "spent much of [his] time in the air watching [his] speeding columns which were [sometimes] about 200 miles apart."¹¹⁷

I commanded my division by keeping contact with my column commanders from jeep or cub plane. My staff was occupied mainly in keeping contact with me and seeing that my directions for supply and maintenance were carried out. They also tried to get word back to higher commanders, but in the extremely fluid operations after the breakout it was up to higher headquarters to find us, and we hoped now and then that they would not be able to do it.¹¹⁸

Needless to say, this type of operation often posed significant challenges to the division and combat command staffs requiring ingenuity and innovation to maintain the furious pace of operations. Often, the "man with the most headaches in the 4th Armored Division was the G-4, the Assistant Chief of Staff for Supply. Wood never let supplies dominate operations; he expected his G-4 to conform to his plans. The 'book' was abandoned; the situation called for innovation and got it."¹¹⁹ All members of the 4th Armored Division staff sought expedient methods of ensuring forward oriented support, but unit supply officers frequently were

forced to be the most innovative in order to keep the columns rumbling forward. The 37th Tank Battalion Supply Officer reported that:

The rapid movement ... would have been impossible without the regular allowance of gasoline. The regular allowance to be carried in the train was over 5,000 gallons (1,059 five gallon drums). Actually, this amount was doubled. The kitchens were taken from the regular 2½ ton cargo carriers and stored in the trailers or other available places so that the cargo carriers could carry more gasoline, oil, etc. The kitchens were not used during this period because of the rapid movement. K-rations and 10-in-1 rations were the order of the day.¹²⁰

Maintaining the speed of advance which Wood demanded would have been difficult without the implementation of such methods. Wood expected his staff and subordinate commanders to use their own initiative in the absence of detailed orders and plans and "the issuance of fragmentary orders [was] the rule rather than the exception at all levels of command."¹²¹ Commanders and staff of the 4th Armored Division learned the necessity "to react quickly to fast-changing situations [and that] they could hardly wait for orders which might be out of date by the time they arrived."¹²² Combat Command commanders had to be flexible and prepared to assume expanded missions and issue orders on their own responsibility as General Dager [CCB, Commander] was required to do when Wood found it expedient to delegate to Dager "control of all the 4th Armored Division forces in the vicinity of Avranches" including Combat Command A and a regiment of the 8th Infantry Division.¹²³ This made Dager, in effect, an instant "division" commander, and Wood fully expected him to continue the frenetic pace of combat without so much as breaking stride. In this fluid and constantly changing environment, standard or normal staff procedures to manage the

battle tended to be the exception rather than the rule.

The overriding necessity for speed during the breakout and subsequent drive across France caused Wood to institute his own modification of standard staff procedures in order to save precious time:

Preparing an army corps attack order, distributing it to the divisions and putting it out to lower units takes a little time. Wood's idea was action now! He used a system to get his orders out quickly, and start his attack rapidly. He used no ground transportation, but flew in his liaison plane to Corps headquarters, listened to the Third Army and Corps plans, spoke briefly to Corps and other division commanders about their parts in the plan, scratched a few boundaries, objectives and notes on a map he pulled out of his shirt, and took off again in his cub plane with a red streamer flying from the tip of each wing. [After locating his combat commands with the help of panel markers, Wood landed.] "P" would pull the map out of his shirt, spread it out and point ... "here's your boundaries, the units left, right and following us and the first, second, and third objectives - let's get at it right now!" ... After brief details of enemy information, air and artillery support, Wood flew to other combat commands, artillery headquarters and to his division headquarters to brief his staff and put his concise attack order on a map and a few message blanks. By the time the Army Corps order arrived at Wood's headquarters, at least one, and sometimes all the ... division objectives had been taken ... 124

Wood's plans were intended to be "tentative and opportunistic"¹²⁵ to retain maximum flexibility to exploit the fluid situation and distributed as quickly as possible so that executing commanders "might have the benefit of the maximum time available for planning the next operation."¹²⁶ Personal and face to face interaction between commanders and between commanders and staff was essential to the success of the division's operations and wire communication was seldom used. "The 4th Armored virtually

never used land wire for communications to the rear; they moved too fast, and some elements were often out of radio range ... Air reconnaissance and Morse Code were commonplace. Usually, however, Wood gave orders to his ... commanders orally and in person ... this increased security and simplified control."¹²⁷

Wood managed his division during its lightning fast drives from Brittany to Lorraine the only way he could to keep the speeding columns moving forward at their breakneck pace. He drilled all elements of the division during two years of training in his techniques and concepts for mobile armored warfare while preaching innovation and initiative to his commanders and staff. He knew instinctively that the warfare he envisioned would require not only disciplined teamwork, but would mandate flexibility and initiative on the part of commanders and staffs at all levels in order to take full advantage of the fluid, constantly changing situation. Of the three commanders investigated in this thesis, Wood was clearly the most dynamic and enthusiastic leader. His style and temperament caused him to be uniquely suited for the type of fluid, mobile warfare at which his unit excelled and at which he proved to be a master.¹²⁸

NOTES

¹Hanson W. Baldwin, Tiger Jack (Fort Collins, Colorado: Old Army Press, 1979), p. 18.

²Kenneth Koyen, The Fourth Armored Division: From the Beach to Bavaria (Watertown, N.Y.: Hungerford-Holbrook Co., 1949), p. 19.

³Hanson W. Baldwin, "'P' Wood of the 4th Armored", Army, 18 (January, 1968): 51.

⁴Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 137.

⁵Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁶Ibid., p. 47.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 51.

⁹The Howitzer, 1912 Edition, (West Point: The United States Military Academy, 1912), p. 142.

¹⁰Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 70.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 72-74.

¹²Ibid., pp. 76-78.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 78-79.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 104-105.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 106. Many of Wood's Field Artillery Journal articles were translations of foreign articles. While this fact could be used to question his depth of intelligence, it does serve to point out that he was interested in worldwide developments affecting his profession and concerned enough to share his discoveries with contemporaries.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 108-112.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 113.

²⁰Ibid., p. 118.

²¹Ibid., pp. 121-122.

²²Ibid., pp. 122-123.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 120-128. Baldwin quotes several versions of this incident, including one in which Wood's anger was provoked by Lear's failure to show respect for the accidental deaths of several 4th Armored Division soldiers who had been killed during the maneuvers. In this version, Wood supposedly jumps to the stage, orders all present to salute the memory of the dead soldiers, then dismisses the assembled officers.

²⁵Ibid., p. 25.

²⁶Martin Blumenson, The United States Army in World War II. European Theater of Operations. Breakout and Pursuit (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 315-316.

²⁷Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 26. The 4th Armored Division lost 400 men during their stay in defensive positions in July. This number is insignificant compared to the losses suffered by the divisions who bore the brunt of the hedgerow fighting, but it probably did serve to provide a level of combat experience which was valuable to the division in its opening offensive drive.

²⁸Russell F. Weigley, Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaigns of France and Germany 1944-1945 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. 158.

²⁹Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, A General's Life: An Autobiography of General of the Army Omar N. Bradley (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 281.

³⁰Weigley, op. cit., pp. 177-178.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., pp. 178-179.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Blumenson, op. cit., p. 358.

³⁵Weigley, op. cit., pp. 178-179.

³⁶Blumenson, op. cit., p. 359.

³⁷Ibid., p. 365.

³⁸Ibid., p. 366.

³⁹Weigley, op. cit., pp. 179-180. Wood obviously exaggerates the importance of the decision to continue operations in Brittany. As Blumenson points out in his article "The Decision to Take Brest", there were many factors involved in the eventual slowing of the Allied drive eastward in late August and, at the time, there were valid reasons for continuing operations in Brittany.

⁴⁰Blumenson, op. cit., p. 367.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²U.S. Department of the Army, 4th Armored Division, Armor in the Exploitation, the 4th Armored Division Across France to the Moselle River, May 1949, p. 6.

⁴³Hugh Cole, The United States Army in World War II. European Theater of Operations. The Lorraine Campaign (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), p. 16.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 84.

⁴⁵Harry Balish, "The Battle of Nancy: A Double Envelopment", Military Review 29 (January 1950):17.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁷Cole, op. cit., p. 243.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 243-244.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 325.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ U.S. Department of the Army, 4th Armored Division, Armor versus Mud and Mines: The 4th Armored Division in the Sarre-Moselle Area, 1950, p. 54.

⁵² Ibid., p. i; Cole, op. cit., pp. 1, 243, 521; Blumenson, op. cit., p. 367. The 4th Armored Division lost, from all causes, 400 men in July, less than 500 in August and less than 600 in September. In November, the unit suffered 2,200 total casualties, and most infantry units averaged only half strength. Tank losses were relatively light (36 medium and 10 light tanks destroyed) but this probably reflects the inability to employ armor in mass and the restriction to a "one tank front".

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Koyen, op. cit., p. 57.

⁵⁵ John Albright, "Introducing 'P' Wood - 4th Armored Division", Armor 81 (January - February, 1972): 25-26; Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Frank J. Price, Troy H. Middleton: A Biography (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1974), p. 188.

⁵⁷ Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 79.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 143.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

⁶¹ Manton S. Eddy, "Diary: Activities of General Eddy, 24 March 1944 and 3 June 1944 to 23 May 1945" (Fort Benning, Georgia: U.S. Army Infantry Museum), 10 October 1944; 4 November 1944.

⁶² Armor versus Mud and Mines, Frontispiece.

⁶³ Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 22.

⁶⁴ Baldwin, "'P' Wood", p. 48.

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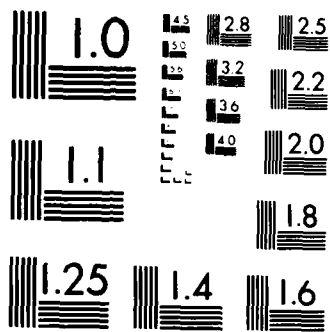
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⁶⁵Eddy Diary, 25 October 1944. Wood had earlier been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for actions at the beginning of the breakout and wore the decoration as one of only two he chose to wear. The other was his DSM from the First World War.

⁶⁶Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 113.

⁶⁷Blumenson, op. cit., p. 365.

⁶⁸Baldwin, Tiger Jack, pp. 116-117.

⁶⁹Baldwin, "'P' Wood", p. 48.

⁷⁰Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 134.

⁷¹Baldwin, "'P' Wood", p. 48. S.L.A. Marshall in Men Against Fire, p. 200, describes perfectly the type of loyalty Wood inspired when he wrote, "No man every wins the loyalty of troops by preaching loyalty. It is given him by them as he proves his possession of the other virtues. The doctrine of a blind loyalty to leadership is a selfish and futile military dogma except in so far as it is ennobled by a higher loyalty in all ranks to truth and decency."

⁷²Baldwin, Tiger Jack, pp. 126, 128, 141.

⁷³Ibid., p. 101.

⁷⁴Armor versus Mud and Mines, Foreword.

⁷⁵Weigley, op. cit., p. 99.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 101-102. It has also been pointed out that the differences between the two men went deeper than personal life-style. Eddy was the more methodical infantryman, a product of his experiences in the previous World War and a recent infantry division commander; quite different in experiences from Wood. Wood's ideas for attempting to break through the line of German defenses in early September clashed with Eddy's preference to advance more deliberately.

⁷⁷Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 96.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 97.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 100-101; Albright, op. cit., p. 27.

⁸⁰ Blumenson, op. cit., p. 368.

⁸¹ Eddy Diary, 12 September, 16 September, 19 September, 28 September, 2 October, 3 October, 12 October, 18 October, 9 November, 18 November, 19 November, 30 November, 1 December and 2 December, 1944.

⁸² Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., et. al., ed. The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The War Years, 5 Volumes, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 4:2333.

⁸³ Weigley, op. cit., pp. 438-439.

⁸⁴ Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 100.

⁸⁵ Stephen E. Ambrose, Eisenhower: Volume I Soldier, General of the Army, President-Elect, 1890-1952 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), p. 597.

⁸⁶ Chandler, et. al., op. cit., 4:2335.

⁸⁷ Albright, op. cit., p. 24.

⁸⁸ Baldwin, "'P' Wood", p. 49; U.S. Department of the Army, 4th Armored Division, Memorandum for Commander, Third U.S. Army, 2 October 1944. This memorandum outlines Wood's "Principles of Armored Employment", many of which had been written earlier in his letter to Liddell Hart (See Note 116). The thrust of these principles is to constantly push men and materials forward as rapidly as possible. The memorandum also contains a suggested organization for combat commands with a note suggesting the adoption of similar organization in infantry divisions.

⁸⁹ Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 75.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 77.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 71, 75-76.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 142.

⁹⁴ Baldwin, "'P' Wood", p. 49.

⁹⁵Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 77.

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 103-106.

⁹⁷Weigley, op. cit., p. 177. It has also been pointed out that Wood's tour as Chief of Staff of Third Army occurred while that unit participated in the 1940 Louisiana maneuvers, the first with extensive armor participation, and he was Chief Evaluator in 1936 mechanized maneuvers in Michigan and Kentucky.

⁹⁸Baldwin, "'P' Wood", p. 50.

⁹⁹Blumenson, op. cit., pp. 360-361.

¹⁰⁰Eddy Diary, 18 September 1944.

¹⁰¹Albright, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁰²Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 148.

¹⁰³Baldwin, "'P' Wood", p. 53.

¹⁰⁴Albright, op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁰⁵Koyen, op. cit., p. 180.

¹⁰⁶Baldwin, "'P' Wood", p. 50.

¹⁰⁷Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 136.

¹⁰⁸U.S. Department of the Army, 4th Armored Division, Tactics and Administration, Armored Division, War Department Observer's Board Draft Report, June 1945.

¹⁰⁹Baldwin, "'P' Wood", p. 52.

¹¹⁰Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 46.

¹¹¹Ibid., pp. 17-18.

¹¹²Armor versus Mud and Mines, p. 84; U.S. Department of the Army, 4th Armored Division, Training Memorandum for Unit Commanders, 23 September 1944. In this memorandum Wood stressed

maintaining speed and aggressive action while warning against the dangers of attacking well-prepared enemy positions. His bold techniques would not prove as successful in this campaign, and his early optimism would turn to frustration and despair.

¹¹³Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 118.

¹¹⁴Ibid., pp. 40-41.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 27.

¹¹⁶John S. Wood to B.H. Liddell Hart, 23 August 1944.

¹¹⁷Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 62.

¹¹⁸Baldwin, "'P' Wood", p. 52.

¹¹⁹Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 68.

¹²⁰Weigley, op. cit., p. 174.

¹²¹Armor in the Exploitation, p. iii.

¹²²Blumenson, op. cit., p. 354.

¹²³Ibid., p. 318.

¹²⁴Baldwin, Tiger Jack, pp. 41-42.

¹²⁵Cole, op. cit., p. 463.

¹²⁶U.S. Department of the Army, 4th Armored Division, The Operations of CC'A', 4th Armored Divison, Normandy Beachhead to the Meuse River, 28 July - 31 August 1944, by LT Col Hal C. Pattison, Command and Staff College, 1945-1947.

¹²⁷Baldwin, Tiger Jack, p. 64.

¹²⁸Wood never returned to combat after his relief. He commanded the Armor Replacement Center at Fort Knox for the remainder of the war and retired from active duty after the war's conclusion. He remained active in public affairs, serving as Chief of Mission in Austria of the International Refugees Organization in 1950. General Wood died in 1966.

CHAPTER 6

THE LEGACY - CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Leaders such as Simpson, Middleton and Wood have provided us with a rich legacy, replete with numerous incidents and examples of their demonstrated abilities as senior leaders from which the inquisitive investigator may draw several conclusions pertinent to the study of senior-level leadership today. These conclusions, although undramatic, do serve to support the underlying assumptions and basic tenets of U.S. Army leadership doctrine discussed in Chapter 1 and reinforce the notion that leadership, despite the complexity of its multi-faceted character, can be analyzed, studied and, in many ways, understood.

An obvious conclusion to draw from this study is that the personal leadership of these three leaders, although quite different and diverse in many ways, played a large part in each commander's success as a combat leader. Simpson's easy-going, low-pressure, "normal" style of personal leadership was for him as effective as Wood's dynamic, impatient, intensity. Middleton, more like Simpson than Wood but nonetheless unique in his personal leadership, capitalized on a supreme calmness in adversity, stiffened by a steely willingness to quickly remove a wavering subordinate. Each of these commanders adopted a style of personal leadership

which best fits his own temperament, background and character but all three earned the respect, loyalty and willing obedience of their subordinates. This willing obedience and a strong desire to accomplish the task at hand was a crucial factor in the ultimate success of these commander's units. All were men of strong character, possessing integrity, honesty and sharing a common, accepted set of values and beliefs. That each one's style was different is not as significant as the fact that each one's style was honest and effective, facilitating their leadership success.

Another obvious conclusion is that each commander exhibited a level of technical competence appropriate to his leadership position and which also facilitated each one's success. All three had somewhat similar background experiences which laid the basic foundation for their technical abilities, although each officer's individual experiences varied somewhat in detail. But their final experiences immediately prior to their commitment to combat in northern Europe were more diverse. Simpson's technical competence was acquired through a number of training commands in the United States, preparing a series of units for other men to lead into battle. When his turn finally came, he spent the last four months of intensive preparation attempting to learn all he could from the combat experiences of units already in France. Middleton gained valuable experience and added to his technical knowledge by leading his 45th Infantry Division in combat in Sicily and Italy during much of 1943. By the time of his commitment in France at the head of his VIII Corps in June 1944, his reputation as a battle-wise, expert tactician was widespread. Wood gained his technical

competence in mobile, armored warfare through years of self-study as well as valuable training experiences in mechanized tactics from 1936 until his initiation to combat in 1944. All of these commanders possessed the technical competence necessary to successfully command their units in combat whether this competence was gained through battle experience, training experience or self-study.

Each commander demonstrated a superior ability to recognize and direct his staff's efforts toward the common goal, but each officer's approach to this organizational leadership was somewhat different. While Simpson and his Chief of Staff, General James E. Moore, preferred the "uncommonly normal" approach of well established Army principles, Wood and the 4th Armored Division Staff preferred to emphasize initiative, innovation and opportunism. Middleton's approach focused on simplicity and avoiding complicated solutions.

Each individual approach to organizational leadership, like the individual personal leadership styles, complimented each commander's strengths and abilities. Middleton was at his best in a controlled, orderly advance where his emphasis on simplicity and normal staff procedures could excel. He was clearly uncomfortable in a fast-moving, far-ranging exploitation and his organizational leadership techniques were not as effective for him in that environment. Wood, on the other hand, was supreme in a fluid, mobile situation but fared poorly when forced to confine his operations to limited, hard-fought objectives, such as he faced in Lorraine. Simpson's scrupulous adherence to regular military staff planning and operational procedures seemed to serve his organization well whether in set-piece engagements such as the Rhineland campaign or

in an exploitation like the sweep to the Elbe. Each approach proved successful, but Simpson's seemed to provide the most flexibility.

A final conclusion which may be drawn from this analysis of senior leadership is that the commanders' successful management practices stressed mission-type orders, regular personal visits to forward units and simple, well-defined goals and objectives. Simpson, Middleton and Wood all preferred mission-type orders which allowed their subordinates sufficient flexibility to accomplish the mission as they saw fit. None of them unduly interfered once the mission had been given. Because of extraordinary circumstances, Middleton was forced during the Ardennes fighting to issue orders directly to battalions, companies and even platoons, but this was clearly exceptional and he obviously preferred to allow his subordinates to exercise their own judgment. Wood's racing columns were advancing so rapidly that his combat command leaders such as Dager and Clarke had no choice but to use their own initiative within the general plan set by Wood. In Simpson's case, mission-type orders were virtually mandatory because an army is not organized or designed to fight the tactical battle but must provide guidance and resources for the corps to enable them to fight it.

These commanders recognized the importance of frequent personal visits to forward units, not only to bolster morale, but to allow for their own assessment of how the battle was progressing. To accomplish this, each commander had to have a reliable, competent Chief of Staff or assistant commander to "mind the store" while he was at the front. Middleton would not have been able to spend only

three hours a day at his command post during an operation without a reliable staff, nor would Wood have been able to spend most of his day chasing his fast moving columns if his presence was continually required at division headquarters. Ninth Army Chief of Staff, Moore, and the Army G-3, Brigadier General Armistead Mead, often made important decisions in Simpson's name, informing the Army commander of the circumstances upon his return.

The management of the battle was facilitated by each commander continually maintaining clearly defined goals and objectives. Wood habitually provided his combat commands with multiple objectives to ensure his subordinates were maintaining a rapid pace by continually looking beyond the immediate task. Planning was key to Ninth Army's maintenance of goals and objectives for the subordinate corps, and the staff was continually devising plans for any number of contingencies which might present themselves. Middleton insisted on simple plans and objectives, and controlled their development through regular staff conferences. Although individual techniques varied with the commander, each one successfully managed his unit by analyzing, deciding, coordinating and supervising his organization's functioning. There are, perhaps, numerous other conclusions which could be drawn from this study, but these are most pertinent to the scope of the thesis. It should also be kept in mind that each commander served at a different level of command, and each level, whether division, corps or army, had its own unique aspects and peculiarities. This must be remembered when trying to draw too fine a line on multiple conclusions.

Implications

Chief among the implications suggested by the conclusions of this thesis is the idea that the framework presented in the Army's senior-level leadership manual does provide a useful means of studying leadership at senior levels. The idea that senior leadership is comprised of a leader's personal leadership, technical competence, organizational leadership and management has, in effect, been tested in this study by applying these four facets to the specific demonstrated attributes of these historical figures. That the subsequent analysis presented a logical, well-documented examination of the senior leadership qualities of these commanders implies that the same framework and techniques can be used for further study and investigation. This is obviously of interest to the student of leadership and organizational behavior, but the results also imply that this framework may be of interest to historians as a means of examining and describing the battlefield performance of other historical figures. Certainly, the conceptual framework at least offers an orderly means of grouping related concepts which can assist in facilitating a detailed analysis.

Like conclusions, there are many other implications which arise concerning personal leadership styles, methods of achieving technical competence, organizational leadership methods and management techniques. Also like conclusions, many are beyond the scope of this thesis and require much more study and analysis. Some of these implications are: there is no clearly superior style of personal leadership; technical competence is achieved in a variety of ways; scrupulous adherence to "regular" military staff procedures

provides the most flexible method of organizational leadership; and, allowing selected subordinates to make important decisions in the commander's absence is a useful management technique. While each of these is certainly implied in this analysis of these three commanders, they all require more thought and careful study before they can be accepted as basic assumptions in the leadership equation.

Recommendations

That further study and investigation are needed in this important area is obvious and requires no detailed elaboration. The decision by the Department of the Army to publish a manual dealing exclusively with the aspects of leadership at senior levels, the first attempt since 1968, indicates clearly that the subject is receiving serious and well-deserved attention. Indeed, this thesis was conceived as a supplement to the preparation of that manual, providing historical examples and background. That this interest and investigation should continue is the overall recommendation of this thesis. It is not so important that this particular methodology be accepted as the only framework through which to analyze senior-level leadership - that it is "a method" is sufficient. Historian Hanson Baldwin alluded to the difficulties of such analyses when he wrote:

The shaping of a General, like the making of a soldier, is a complex process involving both heredity and environment, tradition and experience. It is a process that defies precise definition or consistent pattern. Like the miracle of man, it can be examined, but never completely analyzed. Good generals can be made by their own and other's efforts, and poor generals, fortunately, rarely live in history.¹

Another noted historian, Forrest Pogue, Expressed it in

simpler terms when he said, "You never get it absolutely right. History is always escaping us."² It is more important, then, that thoughtful observers continue to study leadership and its application in the military profession, for it is only through such thoughtful study that understanding can be achieved and this "crucial element of combat power" used effectively.

The intent of such study and application is to create leaders who can meet the challenges of modern combat as these three commanders met the challenges of combat in World War II. That these challenges are similar and immutable over time is undeniable. Weapons and doctrine may change but the basic leadership challenge of any battle - influencing the combat soldier to carry out orders at personal risk - remains constant. War correspondent and combat artist, Sergeant Howard Brodie, eloquently reduced this challenge to its least common denominator when he described this tableau, somewhere in the Rhineland, 1944:

A dead GI in his hole, slumped in his last living position ... A partially smoked cigarette lay inches from his mouth and a dollar-sized circle of blood on the earth ... I saw a man floating in the air amidst the black smoke of an exploding mine. A piece of flesh slobbered by [the squad leader's] face. Some men didn't get up. We went on. A couple of doughs vomited. A piece of shrapnel cut another one's throat as neatly as Jack the Ripper might have done ... [We reached the farm] A dying GI lay in the toolroom. His face a leathery yellow. A wounded dough lay on his belly in the cowshed, in the stench of dung and decaying beets. Another GI quietly said he could take no more ... The wounded dough in the cowshed sobbed for more morphine ... A pool of blood lay under him. I crossed the courtyard to ... where about 60 doughs were huddled. Tank fire came in now ... MG tracers rip[ped] through the brick walls ... Two doughs had their arms around each other; one was sobbing. More MG tracers ripped through the walls and another shell ... most of us were too tired now to do much.³

To lead men such as Sergeant Brodie describes forward against the enemy will be, of course, the principal leadership challenge on any future battlefield as it was in Simpson's, Middleton's and Wood's time. To cause divisions, corps and armies of these men to go forward is the ultimate challenge to tomorrow's senior-level leaders.

NOTES

¹Hanson W. Baldwin, Tiger Jack (Fort Collins, Colorado: Old Army Press, 1979), p. 17.

²Forrest C. Pogue, "Over the Beaches: D-Day", S.L.A. Marshall Lecture, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 17 January 1984.

³Allen H. Mick, ed., With the 102d Infantry Division Through Germany (Nashville: Battery Press, 1980), pp. 148-150.

APPENDIX

NOTES ON SOURCES

This section provides information on those sources which proved to be particularly useful to the preparation and presentation of the thesis.

It is extremely fortunate that one major source exists for each of the three commanders studied. Without a major source dealing primarily with each individual this particular thesis would not be possible. Thomas R. Stone, a field artillery officer and former history instructor at the Military Academy, has written a military biography of General William H. Simpson titled, "He Had the Guts to Say No: A Military Biography of General William Hood Simpson" (Rice University, 1974). This dissertation focuses primarily on General Simpson's experiences as commander of the Ninth U.S. Army from May, 1944 through the crossing of the Roer River in February, 1945. Since this period is also that included within the scope of the thesis, it proved exceptionally useful by providing details of General Simpson's experiences during this time. Although it was quite useful for the reasons stated, it was, in some ways, limited. The reader is frequently left with a feeling that more insight could be gained by expansion of some of the incidents and anecdotes provided in the dissertation. For example, the final chapter on the decision to postpone the Roer River crossing was built up to a grand climax, but it was never developed as fully as it could have been, leading to a "so what?" reaction on this reader's part.

A much more detailed character study is Frank J. Price's book Troy H. Middleton: A Biography published in 1974. A student

of Middleton's at LSU, Mr. Price worked extensively with him and was able to provide a more detailed examination of General Middleton's life and military career. A large portion of this book deals with General Middleton's experiences during the Ardennes Offensive of December, 1944 to January, 1945 which is directly relevant to this thesis, as is the portion of the book concerning the Brittany Campaign. While the book provides many outstanding examples of General Middleton's character and personality, its major flaw is the unabashed tone of hero worship throughout the book. This requires that the reader examine each incident with a critical eye to insure that Mr. Price's obvious high regard for General Middleton does not distort the actual circumstances which occurred. It appears that Mr. Price may have accepted some of General Middleton's reminiscences without verifying them independently. Middleton was recalling events which had happened thirty years previously and may have confused some facts.

The third major source is, perhaps, the best and it is certainly the most well written. Tiger Jack is Hanson W. Baldwin's biography of General John S. Wood and the unit with which his name is inextricably linked - the 4th Armored Division. Formerly military editor for the New York Times, Mr. Baldwin is a Pulitzer Prize winning author. Mr. Baldwin's literary technique is to alternate chapters - one about the 4th Armored Division, the next about General Wood - throughout the book. As usual, Mr. Baldwin's prose is entertaining and highly readable, but the book suffers from brevity and a lack of depth. It appears to have been rushed into print and relies heavily on General Wood's partially completed

memoirs. It is sometimes confusing in its presentation of General Wood's writings. The reader is frequently left with a feeling that a more detailed examination of General Wood could have been accomplished.

The four volume wartime Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower edited by Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. (with Stephen E. Ambrose, associate editor) provides a valuable source of information on how Eisenhower saw his subordinates as revealed in his correspondence, primarily with Marshall. (It even includes a ranking of his top subordinates along with brief notes on each one's potential and abilities.) This work, along with others primarily about Eisenhower and Bradley, also provide valuable insight into the leadership climate which had been created in the European Theater. Written as the events occurred, these papers are not subject to any subsequent revision provided by hindsight as are some of the autobiographies which were written after the war.

Conquer: The Story of the Ninth Army, prepared by the Ninth Army staff shortly after the war, was also a valuable source for reconstructing the activities of General Simpson's command. The book's narrative format is easy to read and logical to follow. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the book's major shortcoming is its complete reluctance to deal with personalities. The reader who wants information on why something was done in a particular way must deduce it from the facts presented. It remains, however, an exceptionally well done example of the unit histories which were prepared immediately following the war for sale to veterans of the unit.

Thomas R. Stone wrote two articles as a result of his

research for the military biography of General Simpson and both are useful for this thesis. "1630 Comes Early on the Roer" was written for Military Review, October 1973, and is essentially the last chapter of his dissertation. The comments previously presented while discussing this dissertation are equally applicable to this article. The other article is entitled "General William Hood Simpson: Unsung Commander of U.S. Ninth Army" and appeared in 1981 in Parameters, U.S. Army War College. This article provides an excellent overview of General Simpson and his personal style of leadership. It focuses on his command of the Ninth Army and, therefore, fits perfectly within the scope of this thesis.

The book which proved to be both useful and disappointing was Russell F. Weigley's Eisenhower's Lieutenants. It was disappointing because it promised so much. Its title purposely selected to evoke images of Douglas Southall Freeman's classic in the mind of the reader, the book fell short of matching that excellent book's study of command. The book is useful, however, as a one volume condensation of the official, multivolume U.S. Army in World War II, European Theater of Operations series. It is also useful for providing a straightforward, interesting overview of the campaigns in northern Europe from the perspective of the top level American commanders. Professor Weigley has an easy, interesting style with a knack for taking otherwise dry facts and presenting them in a readable manner. His major theme is one he has written on before - that is, the U.S. Army's dual heritage of mobility versus firepower. This time he concludes that the inability of senior U.S. commanders to deal successfully with that dual heritage resulted in a longer,

bloodier war.

Stephen E. Ambrose has produced two generally excellent books as a result of his associate editor work on the Eisenhower papers. The earlier book, The Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, provides an interesting narrative of General Eisenhower's service as, first, senior American commander, and finally as Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. Ambrose ties the story together very effectively by using the correspondence from the Eisenhower papers and other sources from the Eisenhower library. His most recent book, Eisenhower: Volume I Soldier, General of the Army, President Elect, 1890-1952, contains much of the work from the first book in a condensed form as the story of Eisenhower as Supreme Commander. Both books contain several references to the three commanders studied in this thesis but are primarily useful for providing information on how Eisenhower handled his subordinates and what the leadership climate was like in the European Theater.

Omar Bradley's two autobiographies each provided several references to the three commanders, although the later book, A General's Life, was completed by Clay Blair after Bradley's death and it is difficult to determine if Blair or Bradley is responsible for a specific passage. It appears to be more straightforward in its willingness to discuss the flaws as well as the strengths of World War II personalities but this could merely be Blair's analysis and thoughts. A Soldier's Story, written only a few years after the war and while most of the individuals concerned were still alive is relatively subdued in comparison.

Several volumes of the U.S. Army in World War II, European Theater of Operations series proved instrumental for their description of campaigns, battles, events and actions. This series is a well-written, thorough examination of all aspects of the drive across northern Europe and as such is a valuable first stop for anyone beginning research into any aspect of these campaigns. For purposes of this thesis, the most useful are: Forrest C. Pogue's The Supreme Command; Hugh M. Cole's Lorraine Campaign and The Ardennes: The Battle of the Bulge; Breakout and Pursuit by Martin Blumenson; and Charles B. MacDonald's The Siegfried Line Campaign and The Last Offensive.

While researching General Middleton's actions during the Battle of the Bulge, several books were read in addition to the biography of General Middleton. One of the best of these, for its literary style and flavor is John Toland's Battle: The Story of the Bulge (although Cole's The Ardennes is more detailed in its presentation). Robert E. Merriam's Dark December is also very good and it is the earliest attempt to detail the confused course of this desperate fight. John S.D. Eisenhower's The Bitter Woods is a well-written account but for the purposes of this thesis it does not spend enough time on what was happening at VIII Corps headquarters with General Middleton. Eisenhower conducted extensive interviews of the participants and made no extraordinary effort to put his father in the best light. Death of a Division, Charles Whiting's story of the disintegration of the 106th Infantry Division during the Bulge, is interesting when it focuses on the individual soldier level but falls short when it ventures up to

the division level and higher. Whiting takes a particular point of view in his presentation and stands by that position regardless of other evidence.

The Last 100 Days by John Toland contains several references to incidents involving General Simpson and which help to confirm that fine soldier's reputation. Beyond that, the book presents an engrossing narrative of the breakup of Germany during the last three months of the war in as understandable and logical a manner as can be accomplished for that confusing and rapidly moving portion of World War II.

Also of value were the available technical reports, after action reports, unit histories and contemporary field orders and instructions. There has been much written in the form of "lessons learned" of 4th Armored Division operations, primarily due to the efforts of soldier-historian Hal C. Pattison who served with the unit in combat. These include: 4th Armored Division Lorraine Campaign Combat Interviews, 9 November to 10 December 1944; The Operation of CC 'A', 4th Armored Division, Normandy Beachhead to the Meuse River, 28 July to 31 August 1944; and Armor versus Mud and Mines, the 4th Armored Division in the Sarre-Moselle Area.

Reports and documents which were helpful in providing details of VIII Corps operations as well as providing a "feel" for the tempo of operations are: VIII Corps, Attack of a Fortified Zone, 9 October 1944; VIII Corps, Letters of Instruction, 7 December 1944 to 1 January 1945; and various VIII Corps Field Orders from August 1944 through March 1945.

Documents which helped form a more complete picture of

General Simpson's Ninth Army include: Ninth U.S. Army, Corps and Divisions Under Ninth U.S. Army in European Theater of Operations; Army Service Forces Report No. 169, Command and Staff Procedure; Ninth U.S. Army, Administrative Instructions, 30 November 1944; and several Ninth U.S. Army After Action Reports.

Although these primary sources do not directly address the exact topic of the thesis, they do provide supplementary information to support that found in major sources as well as providing other clues, such as staff organization and procedures.

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